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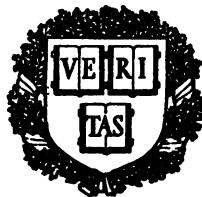
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*THE STORY OF THEODORE PARKER*

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THE STORY OF  
THEODORE PARKER



AMERICAN RATIONALISTIC PREACHER AND  
SOCIAL REFORMER.

Born at Lexington, Mass., August 24, 1810.  
Died at Rome, Italy, May 10, 1860.

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"Parker ranks amongst America's great and noble sons, and may perhaps obtain finally a place amongst the world's great men."—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

◎

STORY OF

# THEODORE PARKER

BY

FRANCES E. COOKE

TO WHICH IS ADDED AN INTRODUCTION AND A  
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES  
BY AND PERTAINING TO HIM

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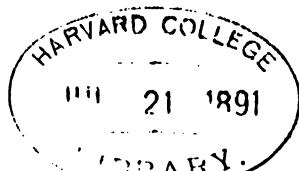
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THIRD EDITION

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THIS little story of Theodore Parker, by an English-woman, should find a place in our literature and have an enduring name.

She has skilfully woven a vivid, picturesque, and inspiring narrative of the events of Mr. Parker's life, without overstepping the bounds of natural and simple description. There is in it enough of imagination, of truth, of character-drawing, of incident, to put the salient points in the life and work of Mr. Parker clearly before the minds of all who desire a portrait of one who is called justly by our worthy critic and friend, James Freeman Clarke, "the ripe fruit of New England," who united "traits of common sense, joined with abstract speculation; sensibility of conscience, poised with calm judgment; the fanatic's devotion to ideas, with the calculating prudence of a man of the world,—which make the basis of New England character and its essential strength. . . .

"In looking for some illustration of this strangely exuberant and varied genius, I have recalled, as its best emblem, a day I once passed in crossing the St. Gothard Mountain, from Italy into Germany. In the morning, we were among Italian nightingales and the sweet melody of the Italian speech. The flowers were all in bloom, and the air balmy with summer perfumes

from vine and myrtle. But, as we slowly climbed the mountain, we passed away from this,—first into vast forests of pine, and then out upon broad fields of snow, where winter avalanches were falling in thunder from above. And so, at noon, we reached the summit, and began to descend, till we again left the snow; and so rode continually downward on a smooth highway, but through terrible ravines, over rushing torrents, into dark gorges, where the precipices almost met overhead, and the tormented river roared far below: and so on and on, hour after hour, till we came down into the green and sunny valleys of Canton Uri, and passed through meadows where men were mowing the hay, and the air was fragrant, not now with Southern vines, but with the Northern apple-blossoms. Here we heard all around us the language of Germany; and then we floated on the enchanting lake of the Four Cantons, and passed through its magnificent scenery, till we reached at dark, the old city of Lucerne. This wonderful day, in its variety, is a type to me of the career of our brother. His youth was full of ardor and hope, full of imagination and poetic dreams, full of studies in ancient and romantic lore. It was Italian and classic. Then came the struggling ascent of the mountain,—the patient toil and study of his early manhood; then the calm survey of the great fields of thought and knowledge, spreading widely around in their majestic repose, and of the holy heavens above his head,—the sublimities of religion, the pure mountain air of devout thought and philosophic insight; and then came the rapid progress, on and on, from this high summit of lonely speculation, down into the practice and use of life,—down among the philanthropies and humanities of

being,—down from the solitary, serene air of lonely thought, through terrible ravines and broken precipices of struggling reform; by the roaring stream of progress, where the frozen avalanche of conservative opposition falls in thunder to crush the advancing traveler; and so, on and on, into the human homes of many-speaking men, among low cottages, along the road the human being travels, and by which blessing comes and goes,—the road which follows—

‘The river’s course, the valley’s peaceful windings,  
Curves round the cornfield and the hill of vines;  
And so, secure, though late, reaches its end.’

Out of classic, Roman-Catholic, mediæval Italy, into Protestant Germany; out of the land of organization and authority into the land of individual freedom; out of the historic South, inheriting all treasures of the past, into the enthusiastic, progressive North, inspired with all the expectations of the future,—such was the course and progress of his earthly day. A long life, though closed at fifty years; as that day on the St. Gotthard seemed to us already three days, long before sundown.”

The reformers of one age become the bulwarks of strength, the inspirers of truth, for the next, and it is only just and right that the generation now growing up among us should have the opportunity offered it of studying all phases of character in the great men who have worked for the progress of humanity. As this last biography of Theodore Parker says, “the memory of one whose reverence was so deep for the essential basis of religion should never die away; and no nobler example can be found in modern times of faithfulness to conscience.”

This is a thoughtful and intelligent community, yet it is doubtful if this little sketch of one of America's great writers, preachers, and speakers will not give the reader something quite fresh in style, afford food for thought, for emulation, and uplift the hearts of many of the younger people who know the name of Theodore Parker only as a faint memory. It is now twenty years since the life of him by John Weiss appeared,—a massive, exhaustive, scholarly, and eloquent book, full, too full, alas ! for the general reader who had neither time nor money to spend on so large a study.

Mr. Weiss wrote this "Life" with the assistance of many private "Journals," little note-books, and data furnished him by friends and relatives whose vivid recollections of Mr. Parker greatly helped the personal touches of the portrait. Mrs. Parker too lent all her aid. Mr. Weiss says that the memory "is indebted greatly to that devoted heart, that delicate disposition, and that good sense, which has been left to recall how loving a husband was this champion of oppressed thoughts and people, and to build, with most careful and assiduous hands, a memorial to the dear one, so illustrious to her by private sweetness as by public service. It is from her that I have derived all my authority and opportunity to undertake this work.

"Only three years have passed since another ministry called the noble and variously gifted man, whom my pen, at a long interval and with many an imperfect movement, has been striving to recall, hoping, at least, not greatly to mar the character which is now perceived to have been bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of America. But the consideration which is paid to

him, in all quarters where it is worthy to be well remembered, through most diverse theological and political confessions, is a tribute which hastens very early to his grave. In England alone, the simultaneous publication of two distinct editions of his Works, though both of them are quite unauthorized, and neither respects the duty and wishes which rule in his late home, sufficiently attests the importance of his writings to the popular mind, to develop therein free and manly thought.

“The soil of no grave was ever more fertile. Men, who expected that his influence would become extinct, and that he had no gifts incisive enough to write his name upon the heart, acknowledge even now that he was a representative man, with conscience and humanity enough to feed a generation, to warm and to save, to build up with healthy tissue, to repair the degenerate waste of a noble people, and to pull down and trample on their crimes alone. He has been missed during these three years. The best men have asked for him, because they wanted New England granite to build with a breakwater, to have firm words to put in slippery places, that the country might be helped across into purpose and a definite policy of freedom. Men have said, at home and abroad, in various tongues, He grows upon us: he was healthy as immortality, he was as unconventional as a period of revolution always must be—a strong soil full of seeds: the more you till it, the better it nods with wheat, and corn, and all the substantial elements of human food. Foreign thinkers are very quick to perceive the drift of his mind, and very enthusiastic to recognize his capacity for entertaining

righteousness. They see from afar, what we are now beginning to see close at hand, that he was a pioneer of this America which has been sending her dreadful columns over roads of his surveying and which he helped to clear.

“ It would be surprising to see how readily everything which is now happening connects itself with his sincerity and indignation, if we did not know that God’s hand holds nothing but things that are sincere, and that His earth must grow the things that are planted. It is the test of the symmetry of a great mind ; its anticipations Providence seems to have overheard, so readily do its thoughts, its just wrath, its salutary hatred, its heavenly hopes, become converted into history.

“ His Life appears at the very moment when the great struggle which he anticipated is going against the wickedness which he smote so valiantly. The sound of victorious cannon is a salvo of recognition over his distant grave — a thundering welcome paid, so soon after those mutterings of hatred and contempt, to the great sense of liberty which he represented. The Lexington blood is cold ; flowers cover that simple and manly presence, and divert our thoughts from its decay ; he is absent upon some ministry that requires a brave and unselfish heart. But look through the hearts of the common people who supply this redness and are blushing so frankly at Gettysburg and Charleston, — what American ever had so good a right as he to say, as for himself, ‘ There is a day after to-day ? ’ ”

The clouds which still obscured the air, murky yet from the great battle-fields of the civil war, where the great truths taught and prayed for by Theodore Parker

were being bravely battled for, were too heavy for the clear study of his life. The very destinies of a great nation hung in the balance, and every day brought to an anxious people new considerations for already over-tasked hearts and minds. The personal influence of Mr. Parker was still too vivid, to those who loved him no words were adequate ; and to his opponents, for he had many and bitter ones, the brave words he spoke in behalf of the oppressed and down-trodden in all places, were only a renewal of the strife which had grown more and more cruel. The manner in which he had been pursued by his opponents made him bitter and severe in his denunciations of wrong and wrong-doers. Mr. Clarke says :—

“ His end was to revolutionize public opinion ; to beat down, by terrible blows of logic and satire, the cool defenders of inhuman wrong to pour floods of fiery invective upon those who opposed themselves to the progress of a great cause ; to fill all minds with a sense of responsibility to God for the use of their faculties ; to show the needs of suffering man ; to call attention to the degraded classes ; to raise up those who are bowed down, and to break every yoke. He also came in the spirit and power of Elijah. He was ready to denounce the Arabs and Herods of our day, the hard-money kings of a commercial city, the false politicians whose lying tongue is always waiting to deceive the simple. His fiery indignation at wrong showed itself, in the most terrible invectives which modern literature knows, against the kidnappers, the pro-slavery politicians, the pro-slavery priests, and the slave-catching commissioners. These invectives were sometimes cruel and severe ; in the

*INTRODUCTION.*

spirit of Moses, David, and John the Baptist, rather than in that of Christ. Such extreme severity, whether in Jew or Christian, defeats its own object ; for it is felt to be excessive and unjust. I cannot approve of Theodore Parker's severity. I consider it false, because extravagant ; unjust, because indiscriminate ; unchristian, because relentless and unsympathizing. But then I will remember how bitterly he was pursued by his opponents ; how Christians offered prayers in their meetings that he might be taken away ; how the leaders of opinion in Boston hated and reviled him ; how little he had, from any quarter, of common sympathy or common charity. I cannot wonder at his severity ; but I cannot think it wise. Being so great, I wish he had been greater. Being so loving to his friends, I wish he could also have felt less bitter scorn towards his opponents."

This state of partisan feeling was too violent against Mr. Parker, and the personal affection borne him by thousands was too deep for any writer to bear impartial evidence as to his peculiar powers, his influence, and his great work.

Ten years passed and then appeared the excellent *Life*, by Mr. Frothingham, full of personal reminiscences, extracts from private letters, and enough of detail to enrich without encumbering the narrative. There is no shadow of an open grave to depress the seeker after the inward life of Parker, there are no long extracts to detract from the simplicity of the portrait which is here given in Mr. Frothingham's admirable style. He says, as one reason for his memoir : "There was more in him than any one mind, even the most candid and sympathetic, could see ; and there was much in him that few, if any, were ever

permitted to see ; the private journal, to which he confided his most secret thoughts, containing many things of deep significance as illustrations of his interior life, which could with the least propriety be published, even when their meaning is clear, and which often need interpretation. None of them exhibit qualities inconsistent with a very noble character ; but some of them point to secret recesses of feeling which cannot be uncovered." Mr. Frothingham, in summing up the work of Mr. Parker, says : —

" Utter fidelity to his calling made Theodore Parker the great preacher that he was : probably, all things considered, the greatest of his generation. He was greater than Spurgeon, whom five or six thousand men flock to hear ; but who lacks learning, knowledge of men and things, breadth and poetic fervor of mind, culture of intellect, and delicacy of perception — an earnest, zealous, toilsome man, powerful through his sectarian narrowness, not, as Parker was, through his human sympathy. He was greater beyond measure than Maurice, Robertson, Stopford Brooke, or any of the new Churchmen ; the delight of those who want to be out of the Church, and yet feel in it. He was greater than Channing in range of thought, in learning, in breadth of human sympathy, in vitality of interest in common affairs, in wealth of imagination, and in the racy flavor of his spoken or written speech. Channing had an equal moral earnestness, an equal depth of spiritual sentiment, a superior gift of look, voice, expression, manner, perhaps a more finely endowed speculative apprehension, a subtler insight ; but as a preacher he addressed a smaller class of his fellow-men. His was an aristocratic, Parker's a democratic, mind.

Channing was ethereal even when treading most manfully the earth, and seraphic even when urging the claims of negroes : Parker, when soaring highest, kept both feet planted on the soil, and, when unfolding the most ideal principles, remembered that his brother held him by the hand for guidance. Channing always talked prose even while dilating on transcendental themes : Parker, even when discussing affairs of the street, would break out into the language of poetry. Channing could sympathize with great popular ideas and movements, but was too fastidious to be ever in close contact with the people : Parker was a man of the people through and through ; one of the people, as much at home with the plainest as the most cultured, more heartily at home with the simple than with the polished ; hence his word ran swiftly in rough paths, while Dr. Channing's trod daintily in high places."

Mr. Frothingham next shows in how many features Parker was the superior of Henry Ward Beecher, who has generally been thought of as the greatest preacher of America, and then proceeds to say of Parker's printed sermons : "Take up any of his volumes containing the sermons he thought worthy of permanent preservation — the volume of *Ten Sermons on Religion* ; the *Theism, Atheism, and Popular Theology*, which is made up of pulpit addresses ; read the pamphlet sermons on *Immortal Life* ; on *The Perils of Adversity and Prosperity* ; *What Religion will do for a Man* ; *Lesson for a Mid-summer Day* ; *The Function and Place of Conscience* ; *The Sermon of Poverty, Of War, Of Merchants* ; *The Chief Sins of the People* ; *The Power of a False Idea* ; and you have many a long hour full of edification, in-

struction, and delight. They are sermons — always sermons ; not essays or disquisitions. The parenetical character runs through everything the man wrote, as the moral element ran through the man. As sermons intended to reach the conscience as well as the understanding of miscellaneous and heedless auditors, who must have a thought expressed in several forms, and reiterated more than once, in order to catch or retain it, they are almost perfect, and are destined to do a most important work in educating and inspiring thousands whom the preacher's voice never reached, who perhaps were not born when he fell asleep. More may be learned from his political speeches and addresses than from many volumes of contemporaneous history. His speculative discourses throw light on abstruse problems of philosophy ; his ordinary sermons are rich in practical wisdom for daily life, and will be read when hundreds of sermons now popular are forgotten, and even when the literature of the pulpit has fallen into that neglect it, for the most part, deserves."

Parker wrote nearly a thousand sermons — an average of about forty-five per year — during the course of his twenty-two years' ministry.

Wonderful tributes have been given to the strong humanitarian influence of Parker. Weiss says : —

“ He had a native love for man. It was not an abstract recognition of new phases of Equality and Fraternity. His nature was not of the cool and serene kind which prefers truths to people, and would never invite the latter except under compulsion. Every scholarly attainment only seemed to widen the channels for his human impulse : it mantled in every gift, it beat to shatter all doc-

trines which degraded or depreciated man. He had all Dr. Channing's reverence for human nature, with a prompt, practical friendliness, gentle to visit the humble, terrible to defend them. Whenever he found a truth, he placed it in the glittering row which sits upon the rugged forehead of humankind: there it looked handsomer to him than in æsthetic and transcendental cabinets. For all things look best where they belong."

Miss Frances Power Cobbe, known for her many excellent writings on advanced thought, and her strong desire to make herself useful in her day and generation, was for years a literary friend and correspondent of Theodore Parker. She felt she owed to him the religious influence which saved her from spiritual wreck. This noble woman, called by Mary Somerville the "best and cleverest woman I ever met," gave to the English public an edition of Parker's writings. She called him "the prophet of the absolute goodness of God." Simultaneously another edition appeared in London, making the works of Parker well known there, and his influence widely felt. To the author of the first English life of Parker, Mr. Dean, who dedicated his volume to Miss Cobbe, she wrote:—

"I am heartily glad you are undertaking the good work of making Parker better known as a living man as well as a writer. As the years pass on, and we travel with them into other regions of thought than those we once crossed with him, my sense of the loss we have sustained by his early death, grows greater rather than less. I never fight a battle for what I deem to be truth or right but I think how his voice would have rung out to cheer and guide us, and his sympathy have followed every fortune of the war."

In her introduction to the published works, she wrote : —

“Theodore Parker’s faith at least bore this result : It brought out in him one of the noblest and most complete developments of our nature which the world has seen ; a splendid devotion, even to death, for the holiest cause, and none the less a most perfect fulfilment of the minor duties and obligations of humanity. Though the last man in the world to claim faultlessness for himself, he was yet to all mortal eyes absolutely faithful to the resolution of his boyhood to devote himself to God’s immediate service. Living in a land of special personal inquisition, and the mark for thousands of inimical scrutinies, he yet lived out his allotted time, beyond the arrows of calumny ; and those that knew him best said that the words they heard over his grave seemed intended for him : ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’! The lilies, which were his favorite flowers, and which loving hands laid on his coffin, were not misplaced thereon. Truly, if men *cannot* gather grapes off thorns, nor figs off thistles, then must the root of the most faithful life have been a sound one.

“He was a great and good man : the greatest and best, perhaps, which America has produced. He was great in many ways. In time to come his country will glory in his name, and the world will acknowledge all his gifts and powers. His true greatness, however, will in future ages rest on this : that God revealed Himself to his faithful soul in His most adorable aspect — that he preached with undying faith, and lived out in his consecrated life the lesson he had thus been taught — that he was worthy to be the *Prophet* of the greatest of all truths, the ABSOLUTE GOODNESS OF GOD, the centre truth of the universe.”

This prophet was not without honor at home as well as abroad, when at the time of his death Emerson spoke such words as these to the sorrowing multitude gathered at the Commemoration service in the great Music Hall in Boston, in June, 1860 : —

“ He never kept back the truth for fear to make an enemy. But, on the other hand, it was complained that he was bitter and harsh ; that his zeal burned with too hot a flame. It is so difficult, in evil times, to escape this charge ! — for the faithful preacher most of all. It was his merit — like Luther, Knox, Latimer, and John the Baptist — to speak tart truth when that was peremptory, and when there were few to say it. But his sympathy with goodness was not less energetic. One fault he had : he overestimated his friends, I may well say it, and sometimes vexed them with the importunity of his good opinion, whilst they knew better the ebb which follows exaggerated praise. He was capable, it must be said, of the most unmeasured eulogies on those he esteemed, especially if he had any jealousy that they did not stand with the Boston public as high as they ought. His commanding merit as reformer is this, that he insisted, beyond all men in pulpits, — I cannot think of one rival, — that the essence of Christianity is its practical morals : it is there for use, or it is nothing ; and if you combine it with sharp trading, or with ordinary city ambitions to gloss over municipal corruptions, or private intemperance, or successful frauds, or immoral politics, or unjust wars, or the cheating of Indians, or the robbery of frontier nations, or leaving your principles at home, to show on the high seas, or in Europe, a supple complaisance to tyrants, it is an hypocrisy, and the truth is not in you ; and no love of

religious music, or of dreams of Swedenborg, or praise of John Wesley, or of Jeremy Taylor, can save you from the Satan which you are.

“His ministry fell on a political crisis also: on the years when Southern slavery broke over its old banks, made new and vast pretensions, and wrung from the weakness or treachery of Northern people, fatal concessions in the Fugitive Slave Bill, and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Two days, bitter in the memory of Boston,—the days of the rendition of Sims and of Burns,—made the occasion of his most remarkable discourses. He kept nothing back. In terrible earnest he denounced the public crime, and meted out to every official, high or low, his due portion. By the incessant power of his statement, he made and held a party. It was his great service to freedom. He took away the reproach of silent consent, that would otherwise have laid against the indignant minority, by uttering, in the hour and place wherein these outrages were done, the stern protest. There were, of course, multitudes to defame and censure the truth-speaker. But the brave know the brave. Fops, whether in drawing-rooms or churches, will utter the fop’s opinion, and faintly hope for the salvation of his soul; but his manly enemies, who despise the fops, honored him; and it is well known that his great hospitable heart was the sanctuary to which every soul conscious of an earnest opinion came for sympathy — alike the brave slave-holder and the brave slave-rescuer. These met in the house of this honest man; for every sound heart loves a responsible person — one who does not in generous company say generous things, and in mean company base things; but says one thing, now cheerfully,

now indignantly, but always because he must, and because he sees that whether he speaks or refrains from speech, this is said over him, and in history, nature, and all souls testify to the same.

“Ah, my brave brother! it seems as if, in a frivolous age, our loss were immense, and your place can not be supplied. But you will already be consoled in the transfer of your genius, knowing well that the nature of the world will affirm to all men, in all times, that which for twenty-five years you valiantly spoke; that the winds of Italy murmur the same truth over your grave, the winds of America over these bereaved streets; that the sea which bore your mourners home affirms it, the stars in their courses, and the inspirations of youth; whilst the polished and pleasant traitors to human rights, with perverted learning and disgraced graces, rot and are forgotten with their double tongue, saying all that is sordid for the corruption of a man.”

In Wendell Phillips' address at the sessions of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, May, 1860, he said:—

“When some Americans die, when most Americans die, their friends tire the public with excuses. They confess this spot; they explain that stain; they plead circumstances as the half justification of the mistake; and they beg of us to remember that nothing but good is to be spoken of the dead. We need no such mantle for the green grave under the sky of Florence; no excuses, no explanations, no spot! Priestly malice has scanned every inch of his garment; it was seamless; it could find no stain. History, as in the case of every other of her beloved children, gathers into her bosom the arrows which malice had shot at him, and says to posterity, ‘Be-

hold the title deeds of your gratitude ! ' We ask no moment to excuse : there is nothing to explain. What the snarling journal thought bold, what the selfish politician feared as his ruin, it was God's seal set upon his apostleship. The little libel glanced across him like a rocket when it goes over the vault : it is passed, and the *royal* sun shines out as beneficent as ever.

" When I returned from New York, on the 13th of this month, I was to have been honored by standing in his desk, but illness prevented my fulfilling that appointment. It was eleven o'clock in the morning. As he sank away the same week under the fair sky of Italy, he said to the most loving of wives and of nurses, ' Let me be buried where I fall ' ; and tenderly, thoughtfully, she selected four o'clock of the same Sunday to mingle his dust with the kindred dust of brave, classic Italy.

" Four o'clock ! The same sun that looked upon the half dozen mourners that he permitted to follow him to the grave, the same moment of brightness lighted up the arches of his own temple as one whom he loved stepped into his own desk, and with remarkable coincidence, for the only time during his absence, opened one of his own sermons to supply my place ; and, as his friend read the Beatitudes over his grave on the banks of the Arno, his dearer friend here read from a manuscript, the text : ' Have faith in God. '

" It is said that in his last hours, in the wandering of the masterly brain, he murmured, ' There are two Theodore Parkers : one rests here dying ; but the other lives, and is at work at home. ' How true ! At that very moment he was speaking to his usual thousands ; at that very instant his own words were sinking down into the

hearts of those that loved him best, and bidding them, in this the loneliest hours of their bereavement, 'have faith in God.' He always came to this [the Anti-Slavery] platform ; he is an old occupant of it. He never made an apology for coming to it. I remember, many years ago, going home from the very hall which formerly occupied this place. He had sat where you sit, in the seats, looking up at us. It had been a stormy, hard gathering, a close fight ; the press calumniating us ; every journal in Boston ridiculing the idea which we were endeavoring to spread. As I passed down the stairs homeward, he put his arm within mine, and said, 'You shall never need to ask me again to share that platform.' It was the instinct of his nature, true as the bravest heart. The spot for him was where the battle was hottest. He had come, as half the clergy came, a critic. He felt it was not his place ; that it was to grapple with a tiger, and throttle him. And the pledge that he made he kept ; for whether here or in New York, as his reputation grew, when that lordly mammoth of the press, *The Tribune*, overgrown in its independence and strength, would not condescend to record a word that Mr. Garrison or I could utter, but bent low before the most thorough scholarship of New England, and was glad to win its way to the confidence of the West by being his mouth-piece — with that weapon of influence in his right hand, he always placed himself at our side, and in the midst of us, in the capital state of the empire.

"You may not think this great praise ; we do. Other men have brought us brave hearts ; other men have brought us keen-sighted and vigilant intellects ; but he brought us, as no one else could, the loftiest stature of

New England culture. He brought us a disciplined intellect, whose statement was evidence, and whose affirmation the most gifted student took long time before he ventured to doubt, or to contradict. When we had nothing but our characters, nothing but our reputation for accuracy, for our weapons, the man who could give to the cause of the slave that weapon was indeed one of its ablest and foremost champions.

“Lord Bacon said in his will, ‘I leave my name and memory to foreign lands, and to my own countrymen after some time be passed.’ No more fitting words could be chosen, if the modesty of the friend who has just gone before us would have permitted him to adopt them for himself. To-day, even within twenty-four hours, I have seen symptoms of that repentance which Johnson describes, —

‘When nations, slowly wise and meanly just,  
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.’

“The men who held their garments aside, and desired to have no contact with Music Hall, are beginning to show symptoms that they will be glad, when the world doubts whether they have any life left, to say, ‘Did not Theodore Parker spring from our bosom?’ Yes, he takes his place, his serene place, among those few to whom Americans point as a proof that the national heart is still healthy and alive. Most of our statesmen, most of our politicians, go down into their graves, and we cover them up with apologies: we walk with reverent and filial love backward, and throw the mantle over their defects, and say, ‘Remember the temptation and the time!’ Now and then one, now and then one, goes up silently,

and yet not unannounced, like the stars at their coming, and takes his place: while all eyes follow him, and say, 'Thank God that it is the promise and the herald; it is the nation alive at its heart. God has not left us without a witness; for His children have been among us, and one half have known them by love, and one half have known them by hate — equal attestations to the divine life that has passed through our streets.' "

Again he spoke burning words of eloquent eulogy, heart-felt and sincere, at the commemoration services, when he said: —

"There is one thing every man may say of this pulpit: it was a live reality, and no sham. Whether tearing theological idols to pieces at West Roxbury, or here battling with the every-day evils of the streets, it was ever a live voice, and no mechanical or parrot tune; ever fresh from the heart of God, as these flowers, these lilies — the last flower over which, when eye-sight failed him, with his old gesture he passed his loving hand, and said, 'How sweet!' As in that story he loved so much to tell of Michel Angelo, when in the Roman palace Raphael was drawing his figure too small, Angelo sketched a colossal head of fit proportions, and taught Raphael his fault: so Parker criticized these other pulpits, not so much by censure as by creation; by a pulpit proportioned to the hour, broad as humanity, frank as truth, stern as justice, and loving as Christ. Here is the place to judge him. In St. Paul's Cathedral the epitaph says, if you would know the genius of Christopher Wren, 'look around!' Do you ask proof, how full were the hands, how large the heart, how many-sided the brain, of your teacher: listen, and you will hear it in the glad, triumphant cer-

tainty of your enemies — that you must close these doors, since his place can never be filled. Do you ask proof of his efficient labor, and the good soil into which that seed fell: gladden your eyes by looking back, and seeing for how many months the impulse his vigorous hand gave you has sufficed, spite of boding prophecy, to keep these doors open — yes, he has left those accustomed to use weapons, and not merely to hold up his hands. And not only among yourselves: from another city I received a letter, full of deep feeling: and the writer, an orthodox church member, says: —

“I was a convert to Theodore Parker before I was a convert to —. If there is anything of value in the work I am doing to-day, it may, in an important sense, be said to have had its root in Parker’s heresy; I mean the habit—without which orthodoxy stands emasculated, and good for nothing—of independently passing on the empty and rotten pretensions of churches and churchmen, which I learned earliest, and, more than from any other, from Theodore Parker. He has my love, my respect, my admiration.”

“Yes, his diocese is broader than Massachusetts. His influence extends very far outside these walls. Every pulpit in Boston is freer and more real to-day because of the existence of this. The fan of his example scattered the chaff of a hundred sapless years. One whole city is fresher to-day because of him. The most sickly and timid soul under yonder steeple, hide-bound in days and forms and beggarly Jewish elements, little dreams how ten times narrower and worse it was before this sun warmed the general atmosphere around. As was said of Burke’s unsuccessful impeachment of Warren Hastings,

'never was the great object of punishment, the prevention of crime, more completely obtained. Hastings was acquitted ; but tyranny and injustice were condemned wherever English was spoken.' So we may say of Boston and Theodore Parker. Grant that few adopted his extreme theological views, that not many sympathize in his politics : still, that Boston is nobler, purer, braver, more loving, more Christian, to-day, is due more to him than to all the pulpits that vex her Sabbath air. He raised the level of sermons, intellectually and morally. Other preachers were compelled to grow in manly thought, and Christian morals, in very self-defence. As Christ preached of the fall of the Tower of Siloam the week before, and what men said of it in the streets of Jerusalem ; so Parker rang through our startled city the news of some fresh crime against humanity — some slave-hunt, or wicked court, or prostituted official — till frightened audiences actually took bond of their new clergyman that they should not be tormented before their time.

"Men say he erred on that great question of our age — the place due to the Bible. But William Craft, one of the bravest men who ever fled from our vulture to Victoria, writes to a friend : 'When the slave-hunters were on our tracks, and no other minister except yourself came to direct our attention to the God of the oppressed, Parker came with his wise counsel, and told us where and how to go ; gave us money. But that was not all : he gave me a weapon to protect our liberties, and a Bible to guide our souls. I have that Bible now, and shall ever prize it most highly.'

"How direct and frank his style ! just level to the nation's ear. No man ever needed to read any of his

sentences twice to catch its meaning. None suspected that he thought other than he said, or more than he confessed.

“Like all such men, he grew daily; never too old to learn. Mark how close to actual life, how much bolder in reform, are all his later sermons, especially since he came to the city; every year his step

‘Forward, persevering to the last,  
From well to better, daily self-surpassed.’

“There are men whom we measure by their times, content and expecting to find them subdued to what they work in. They are the chameleons of circumstance; they are æolian harps, toned by the breeze that sweeps over them. There are others who serve as guide-posts and landmarks: we measure their times by them. Such was Theodore Parker. Hereafter the writer will use him as a mete-wand to measure the heart and civilization of Boston. Like the Englishman, a year or two ago, who suspected our great historian could not move in the best circles of the city when it dropped out that he did not know Theodore Parker; distant men gauge us by our toleration and recognition of him. Such men are our nilometers: the harvest of the future is according to the height that the flood of our love rises round them. Who cares now that Harvard vouchsafed him no honors? But history will save the fact to measure the calculating and prudent bigotry of our times.

“Some speak of him only as a bitter critic and harsh prophet. Pulpits and journals shelter their plain speech in mentioning him under the example of what they call his ‘unsparing candor.’ Do they feel that the *strangeness*

of their speech, their unusual frankness, needs apology and example? But he was far other than a bitter critic; though thank God for every drop of that bitterness, that came like a wholesome rebuke on the dead, saltless sea of American life! Thank God for every indignant protest, for every Christian admonition, that the Holy Spirit breathed through those manly lips! But, if he deserved any single word, it was 'generous.' *Vir generosus* (magnanimous man) is the description that leaps to the lips of every scholar. He was generous of money. Born on a New England farm in those days when small incomes made every dollar matter of importance, he no sooner had command of wealth than he lived with open hands. Not even the darling ambition of a great library ever tempted him to close his ear to need. Go to Venice or Vienna, to Frankfort or to Paris, and ask the refugees who have gone back—when here, friendless exiles but for him—under whose roof they felt most at home. One of our oldest and best teachers writes me that telling him once, in the cars, of a young lad of rare mathematical genius, who could read Laplace, but whom narrow means debarred from the University—'Let him enter,' said Theodore Parker: 'I will pay his bills.'

"No sect, no special study, no one idea bounded his sympathy; but he was generous in judgment where a common man would have found it hard to be so. Though he does not go 'down to dust without his fame,' though Oxford and Germany sent him messages of sympathy, still no word of approbation from the old grand names of our land, no honors from university or learned academy, greeted his brave, diligent, earnest life. Men confess that they voted against his admission to scientific

bodies for his ideas, feeling all the while that his brain could furnish half the academy ; and yet, thus ostracized, he was the most generous, more than just, interpreter of the motives of those about him, and looked on while others reaped where he sowed, with most generous joy in their success. Patiently analyzing character, and masterly in marshalling facts, he stamped with generous justice the world's final judgment of Webster ; and, now that the soreness of the battle is over, friend and foe allow it.

“ He was generous of labor. Books never served to excuse him from any of the homeliest work. Though ‘ living wisdom with each studious year,’ and passionately devoted to his desk, as truly as was said of Milton, ‘ the lowliest duties on himself he laid.’ What drudgery of the street did that scholarly hand ever refuse? Who so often and constant as he in the trenches when a slave case made our city a camp? Loving books, he had no jot of a scholar’s indolence or timidity but joined hands with labor everywhere. Erasmus would have found him good company, and Melancthon got brave help over a Greek manuscript ; but the likeliest place to have found him in that age would have been at Zwingle’s side on the battlefield pierced with a score of fanatic spears ; for, above all things, he was terribly in earnest. If I might paint him in one word, I should say he was always *in earnest*.

“ Fortunate man ! he lived long enough to see the eyes of the whole nation turned toward him as to a trusted teacher ; fortunate, indeed, in a life so noble that even what was scorned from the pulpit will surely become oracular from the tomb ; thrice fortunate, if he

loved fame and future influence, that the leaves which bear his thoughts to posterity are not freighted with words penned by sickly ambition, or wrung from hunger, but with earnest thoughts on dangers that make the ground tremble under our feet, and the heavens black over our head—the only literature sure to live. Ambition says, ‘I will write and be famous.’ It is only a dainty tournament, a sham fight, forgotten when the smoke clears away. Real books are like Yorktown or Waterloo, whose cannon shook continents at the moment, an echo down the centuries. Through such channels Parker poured his thoughts.

“And true hearts leaped to his side. No man’s brain ever made him warmer friends; no man’s heart ever held them firmer. He loved to speak of how many hands he had in every city, in every land, ready to work for him. With royal serenity he levied on all. Vassal hearts multiplied the great chief’s powers; and at home the gentlest and deepest love, saintly, unequaled devotion, made every hour sunny, held off every care, and left him double liberty to work. God comfort that widowed heart!

“Judge him by his friends. No man suffered any where who did not feel sure of his sympathy. In sick chambers, and by the side of suffering humanity, he kept his heart soft and young. No man lifted a hand any where for truth and right who did not look on Theodore Parker as his fellow-laborer. When men hoped for the future, this desk was one stone on which they planted their feet. Where more frequent than around his board would you find men familiar with Europe’s dungeons, and the mobs of our own streets? Wherever the fugitive

slave might worship, here was his Gibraltar; over his mantel, however scantily furnished, in this city or elsewhere, you were sure to find a picture of Parker.

“The blessings of the poor are his laurels. Say that his words won doubt and murmur to trust in a living God: let that be his record. Say that to the hated and friendless he was shield and buckler: let that be his epitaph. The glory of children is the father's. When you voted ‘That Theodore Parker should be heard in Boston,’ God honored you. Well have you kept that pledge. In much labor and with many sacrifices he has laid the corner-stone: his work is ended here. God calls you to put on the top stone. Let fearless lips and Christian lives be his monument.”

Garrison also bore his fitting tribute to his departed brother in the great conflict, at the Anti-Slavery Sessions:—

“Mental independence and moral courage characterized Theodore Parker in respect to all his convictions and acts. He was not technically ‘a Garrisonian abolitionist,’ though often upon that platform, but voted with the Republican party, though faithfully rebuking it for its timidity and growing spirit of compromise. He was no man's man, and no man's follower, but acted for himself, bravely, conscientiously, and according to his best judgment.

“But what of his theology? I do not know that I can state the whole of Parker's creed, but I remember a part of it: ‘There is one God and Father over all, absolute and immutable, whose love is infinite, and therefore inexhaustible, and whose tender mercies are over all the works of His hand; and, whether in the body or out of

the body, the farthest wanderer from the fold might yet have hope.' He believed in the continual progress and final redemption of the human race ; that every child of God, however erring, would ultimately be brought back. You may quarrel with that theology, if you please : I shall not. I like it ; I have great faith in it ; I accept it. But this I say in respect to mere abstract theological opinions—the longer I live the less do I care about them, the less do I make them a test of character. It is nothing to me that any man calls himself a Methodist, or Baptist, or Unitarian, or Universalist. These sectarian shibboleths are easily taken upon the lip, especially when the offence of the cross has ceased. Whoever will, with his theology, grind out the best grist for our common humanity, is the best theologian for me.

"Many years ago, Thomas Jefferson uttered a sentiment which shocked our eminently Christian country, as being thoroughly infidel: 'I do not care,' said he, 'whether my neighbor believes in one God, or in twenty gods, if he does not pick my pocket.' Thus going to the root of absolute justice and morality, and obviously meaning this: if a man pick my pocket, it is in vain he tells me, in palliation of his crime, I am a believer in one true and living God. That may be ; but you are a pick-pocket, nevertheless. Or he may say, I have not only one God, but twenty gods: therefore, I am not guilty. Nay, but you are a thief ! And so we always throw ourselves back upon character ; upon the fact whether a man is honest, just, long-suffering, merciful ; and not whether he believes in a denominational creed, or is a strict observer of rites and ceremonies. This was the religion of Theodore Parker, always exciting his marvellous powers

to promote the common good, to bless those who needed a blessing, and to seek and to save the lost ; to bear testimony in favor of the right in the face of an ungodly age, and against a 'frowning world.' We are here to honor his memory. How can we best show our estimation of him ? By trying to be like him in nobility of soul, in moral heroism, in fidelity to the truth, in disinterested regard for the welfare of others.

"Mr. Parker, though strong in his convictions, was no dogmatist, and assumed no robes of infallibility. No man was more docile in regard to being taught, even by the lowliest. Mr. Phillips has done him no more than justice, when he said that he was willing and eager to obtain instruction from any quarter. Hence he was always inquiring of those with whom he came in contact, so that he might learn, if possible, something from them that might aid him in the great work in which he was engaged.

"When the question of 'Woman's Rights' first came up for discussion, like multitudes of others, Mr. Parker was inclined to treat it facetiously, and supposed it could be put aside with a smile. Still it was his disposition to hear and to learn ; and as soon as he began to investigate, and to see the grandeur and world-wide importance of the 'Woman's Rights' movement, he gave to it his hearty support before the country and the world.

"How he will be missed by those noble, but unfortunate, exiles who come to Boston from the old world from time to time, driven out by the edicts of European despotism ! What a home was Theodore Parker's for them ! How they loved to gather round him in that home ! And what a sympathizing friend and trusty adviser, and generous

assistant, in their times of sore distress, they have found in him ! There are many such in Boston and various parts of our country who have fled from foreign oppression, who will hear of his death with great sorrow of heart, and drop grateful tears to his memory."

From foreign thinkers and writers recognition comes, and will gain in strength as the years pass. As early as 1846, James Martineau in a review of Mr. Parker's "Discourse on Religion," in *The Prospective Review* for February, 1846, says : —

"Gladly then do we gird up our hearts to follow the bold and noble steps of Theodore Parker over the ample province of thought which he traverses in his Discourse on Religion. However startling the positions to which he conducts us, and however breathless the impetuosity with which he hurries on, the region over which he flies is no dreamland, but a real one, which will be laid down truly or falsely in the minds of reflecting men : his survey of it is grand and comprehensive, complete in its boundaries, if not always accurate in its contents ; and the glass of clear and reverential faith through which he looks at all things, presents the most familiar objects in aspects beautiful and new. . . .

"So vast a mass of matter, requiring for its management a very various skill, cannot, it may be supposed, be dealt with by one man, otherwise than superficially. Yet there is a mastery shown over every element of the great subject ; and the slight treatment of it in parts no reader can help attributing to the plan of the work, rather than to the incapacity of the author. From the resources of a mind singularly exuberant by nature and laboriously enriched by culture, a system of results is here thrown up and

spread out in luminous exposition : and though the processes are often imperfectly indicated by which they have been reached, they so evidently come from the deep and vital action of an understanding qualified to mature them that an opponent who might stigmatize the *book* as superficial would never venture to call the *author* so. There are few men living, we suspect, who would like to have a controversy with him on any one of his many heresies. The references in his notes, though often only general, are, when needful, sufficiently specific and various to show an extent of reading truly astonishing in so young a writer" [Parker was only thirty-two when he published the work Dr. Martineau was now reviewing] ; "yet the glow and brilliancy of his page prove that the accumulative mass of other men's thought and learning has been but the fuel of his own genius. The copiousness of German erudition, systematized with a French precision, seems here to have been absorbed by a mind having the moral massiveness, the hidden tenderness, the strong enthusiasm, of an English nature.

"The least perfect of his achievements appears to us to be the metaphysical ; he is too ardent to preserve self-consistency throughout the parts of a large abstract scheme ; too impetuous for the fine analysis of intricate and evanescent phenomena. His philosophical training, however, gives him great advantages in his treatment of concrete things and his views of human affairs ; and in nothing would he, in our opinion, more certainly excel than in history — whether the history of thought and knowledge or of society and institutions.

"As to the form in which our author presents his ideas, our readers must judge of that from the passages we may

have occasion to quote. We have small patience at any time with the criticisms on style in which 'Belle-Lettres men' and rhetoricians delight; and where we speak to one another of the solemn mysteries of life and duty in God, such things affect us like a posture-master's discussions of Christ's sitting attitude in the Sermon on the Mount, or some prudish milliner's critique on the penitent wiping his feet with her hair. Men who neither think nor feel, but only learn, pretend, and imitate, may make an art out of the deepest utterances of the human soul; but from these histrionic beings, who would applaud the elocution of Isaiah, and study the delivery of a 'Father, forgive them!' such a man as Theodore Parker recalls us with a joyful shame. He reasons, he meditates, he loves, he scorns, he weeps, he worships, *aloud*. It may be thought very improper that a man should thus publish *himself*, instead of some choice, decorous excerpts, fit for the public eye. As, in prayer to God, it is deemed in these days no sin to utter, instead of our real desires, something else which we should hold it decent to desire; so, in addressing men, it is esteemed wise, not to say, or even to inquire, what we *do* think, but to put forth what it might be as well to think. Weary of all this, and finding nothing but a holy dulness and sickly unreality in the conventional theology of pulpit and the press, we delight in our author's irrepressible unreserve. No doubt there are rash judgments; there is extravagant expression; the coloring of his emotions is sometimes too vivid, the edge of his indignation too sharp. But he believes, and *therefore* does he speak. You have his mind. These things are true to him. . . .

"Honor then to the manly simplicity of Theodore

Parker. Perish who may among Scribes and Pharisees, — 'orthodox liars for God,' — *he* at least 'has delivered his soul.' . . .

"His vast reading, and his quick sympathy with what is great and generous of every kind, has given an eclectic character to his philosophy. His mind refuses to let go anything that is true and excellent. . . .

"In the Discourse on Religion, he has nowhere stated the principles of his *ethical* doctrine, or bridged over the chasm which separates it from his theology. But the purity and depth of his conceptions of character, his intense abhorrence of falsehood and evil, the moral loftiness of his devotion, and the generous severity of his rebuke, are in the strongest contradiction to the serene complacency of a mind suspended in metaphysic elevation *above* the point where truth and error, right and wrong, diverge, and looking down from a station whence all things look equally divine.

"If there is any one who for his judgment on the historical evidence for the miracles, chooses to denounce him as 'no Christian'; who conceives that a literary verdict, referring the Gospels to the second century instead of the first, outlaws a man from 'the Kingdom of God'; who can read this book, and suppose in his heart that here is a man whom Jesus would have driven from the company of his disciples,— we can only wish that the accuser's title to the name was as obvious as the accused's. Alas for this poor wrangling! To hear the boastful anger of our stout believers, one would suppose that to take up our faith on too easy terms, and to be drawn into discipleship less by logic than by love, were the very Sin against the Holy Ghost! Jesus thought it might not be too much

to expect of his *enemies*, that, being eye-witnesses, they might 'believe *his works*' ; but of his friends it was the mark, that they would 'believe *him*.' But now-a-days who are our 'patient Christians,' ever busy with indictments against all counterfeits? Why, men who think it supremely ridiculous to accept anything or being as divine, unless visible certificates of character be written on earth, air, and water, and Heaven, will pawn the laws of nature as personal securities.

"We part with Theodore Parker in hope to meet again. He has, we are persuaded, a task, severe perhaps, but assuredly noble, to achieve in this world. The work we have reviewed is the confession, at the threshold of a high career, of a great Reforming soul, that has thus cleared itself of hindrance, and girded up itself for a faithful future. The slowness of success awaiting those who stand apart from the multitude will not dismay him. He knows the ways of Providence too well."

In Stopford Brooke's Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson, he says : —

"Theodore Parker he admired for the eloquence, earnestness, learning, and indignation against evil, and against forms without a spirit, which mark his writings."

"Much that Theodore Parker says on the subject of inspiration is very valuable, though I am of opinion that Martineau has, with much sagacity and subtlety, corrected in the review certain expressions which are too unguarded, and which, unless modified, are untrue." "Dissenters anathematize Unitarians, and Unitarians of the Old School condemn the more spiritual ones of the New."

From a French pasteur, Dr. Albert Reville, came appreciative words : —

“Arrived at the end, we must ask ourselves what remains of that brilliant existence which we have sketched, and to what extent Parker’s vision was prophetic when, on his death-bed, he saw himself doubled, and continuing his work in America, while his body dissolved in an Italian soil.

“Parker founded neither a church nor a school. His ministry, his words, his writings, his entire life, was a demonstration of spirit and power, rather than the construction of anything visible and organized; consequently it is difficult to indicate the positive results of his efforts, although the latent energy of the principles which he proclaimed, and the impressions which he left behind, are incontestable.

“What a fine comment have the last five years [the years including the American War] furnished on the social and religious teachings of the Boston preacher. Hardly had his ashes grown cold, when the Union arrived upon the border of that Red Sea which he had so often foretold. It arrived there without suspecting the depth of the water, and imbued with illusions and prejudices which could not but make the passage more difficult and painful than the most clear-sighted could have foreseen.

“If now we go back to days preceding this fearful duel, we may say without the least exaggeration that Parker shines in the first rank of those who cried to the North most energetically, *Be on your guard*; and who contributed most largely to arouse the mind of the people out of that torpor into which it had been thrown by material prosperity. The Massachusetts volunteers were the first in the hour of the greatest peril to make their bodies a rampart around the Federal capital, seriously menaced

by the insurgent army. The silver and gold of New England never ceased to flow forth, even in the darkest hours, to sustain the good cause. At length the day came when the President of the United States saw himself able to proclaim the abolition of slavery ; which he did amid the plaudits of the same crowd that selfish sophists had so long tried to blind, touching interests the most manifest. Parker's ashes may well have thrilled with joy when touched by the news reverberating from the other side of the Atlantic. We have no wish to glorify our hero by letting persons little instructed in American affairs take the impression that the Boston pastor was the principal author of that patriotic revolution. But we must not underrate the glorious part which belongs to him ; and if only you know the man, you will comprehend the influence which he exercised on those eminent citizens of the Union, Wendell Phillips, Chase, Seward, Sumner, Hale, Banks, Horace Mann, and others, his friends, his admirers, his fellow-combatants, with whom he ceaselessly conversed and corresponded, encouraging them, consoling them, commanding them, sometimes frankly blaming them, always feeling a warm interest in their noble endeavors, always ready to enhance his public instructions by his generous and faithful example. Who, moreover, can measure the amount of liberal feeling which his numerous lectures poured into the different States of the Union ? How often ears of corn, ripened before others under the rays of that frank and enlightened liberalism, foretold the hour of the coming harvest ! All that cannot be calculated, but it has weight — immense weight — in the scales of the history of God's kingdom on earth.

“Theodore Parker undermined slavery by his bold criti-

cisms of the Bible more, perhaps, than by the discourses directly prompted by the horror the observance called forth in his mind. And as a theology more liberal than that which prevailed around him was in his hands a marvellous instrument of political liberalism, so the future will show us America profiting by its political liberalism to realize, sooner and better than any other nation, the religious liberalism after which the soul of our age is sighing. For all liberalisms, like all liberties, are linked together. It is chiefly as a religious thinker and writer that Theodore Parker belongs to the future.

“What ought we in general to think of Parker’s religious work? This question interests the old world not less than the new. We may describe Parker’s religion as Christian Theism, and the characteristic of that mode of religion is this—that to one or two very simple and, if I may so speak, very sober doctrines, it adds a great richness of applications to individual and social life. For ourselves there is not the slightest doubt that all the currents of our modern life lead us to that side of religion; and we are not shaken in that conviction by the cries of terror uttered by those who desire at any cost that we should remain immured in a past where we should be stifled, any more than by the frivolous predictions which fall from those who, disowning one of the most ineradicable instincts of human nature, go about declaring that we are hastening on to the end of all religion. There will arise in the near future a prolific synthesis of religion and liberty, under the ægis of spiritualism. Under what form and to what point has Theodore Parker contributed to prepare this magnificent future? We must not look for a professor of systematic theology in Theodore Parker:

he is an originator, he is a singer inspired with the future. You may reject many of his ideas, but if you all love religious liberty and social progress you cannot but warmly sympathize with the man. It is much less system of doctrine he will give you than impressions, consolations, hopes, courage, faith. His religion is not an abstract theory, but a spontaneous fact of his nature. As he himself remarked, 'his head is not more natural to his body than his religion to his soul.' His science, his erudition, very great in reality and of the best grain, are not the servants, but the auxiliaries, the friends, of his unshaken faith in the living God, and aid him to put away everything in the dogmas and institutions of former days which hindered him from enjoying the Heavenly Father's immediate presence and from bathing in the waters of infinite love. 'Truth in Parker is, you feel, a necessity, a passion of his nature, on account of which you pardon his outbursts; such is the courage and loyalty of his soul. Let us remember that the age is going forward, that modern society in its imperious exigencies calls henceforth for more radical and exact solutions than the compromises which up till now have been accounted satisfactory. For that, need is there of the generous audacity of Parker, going straight ahead without troubling himself about the dust he raises in passing through so many ruins, his eyes ever fixed on the everlasting light. Moreover, it would be unjust to see in him only the severe and energetic wrestler. There is in his nature, — and this constitutes its charm, — by the side of and below his revolutionary ardor, a pure and rich mysticism, delightful to contemplate. His profound faith in the living God carries him beyond the poor

world in which we live, and transports him before the time into the region of celestial harmonies. He is one of those thinkers who, to unsparing censure of the men and the things of their own times, have joined the most serene anticipations of the definite future of humanity. To the feverish agitations of his career as a reformer, his religion is that which the depths of the ocean are to the surface which the winds toss into confusion. After every tempest the inviolable calm of the abyss resumes its mastery over the entire mass, which, again peaceful and smiling, reflects the boundless azure of the sky.

“To sum up, Parker was essentially a prophet; and he is one of those contemporaneous appearances which, better than laborious researches, enable us to understand certain phenomena which at first sight one would think belonged exclusively to the past. What were the prophets in the bosom of Israel? Not diviners, not utterers of supernatural oracles, as is too often fancied. They were the organs of a grand idea,—a simple, austere, even abstract idea,—hidden in the heart of the national tradition: the idea of pure monotheism. In order to disengage that idea from what disfigured it, from the people’s sins which caused it to be misapprehended, from the abuses of a priesthood and a throne interested, as they thought, in its remaining forgotten, the prophets persisted in their path of duty in spite of all opposition; and notwithstanding the ill-will of which they were the objects at every step, they came forth from the old soil of Israel always with a deeper faith and a stouter heart. For their force sprang from the fact that at the bottom the spirit of Israel conspired with their spirit, and the

more hostility that spirit encountered the more did it become conscious of itself, and the more it asserted itself clearly and demonstratively. Kings, priests, people — all might find the prophets unendurable, but within a secret voice declared to them that nevertheless the prophets were in the right. In the same way the spirit of Protestantism and of the American constitution took possession of Theodore Parker near his father's workshop, as of old the spirit of Monotheism seized the prophet by the side of his plow or under his wild fig-trees. This man, who might have lived at ease beneath the shadow of his pines, in the midst of the flowers of his parsonage, and who goes out to preach from city to city 'against the people's sins,' — this man overruled by an idea simple, grand, implicitly contained in the religion of his childhood and the constitution of his native land : the idea of the free development of the human personality, — who consecrates his existence to the task of disembarrassing that idea from all the shackles created by interests, by vices, by sacerdotalism, by officials' prerogatives ; this man, who refuses every compromise, who has no kind of indulgence for political or commercial necessities ; who, in spite of the many bitter cups he is forced to drink, joyously proclaims on the rooftops, and foretells, with an assurance that is disconcerted by nothing, the final victory of truth and liberty — **THIS MAN IS A PROPHET.**

" Not only for the United States was Parker a prophet. His patriotism was not exclusive ; he felt himself to be literally a citizen of the world, and if he loved America so well it is because in her he saw the predestined soil where some day the ideal, dreamt of in our Europe,

would receive full realization. For us also, at the moment when long-established edifices and traditions nod to their fall ; when it is anxiously asked, whether they will not in their fall crush both those who uphold and those who assail them, such a man as Parker is a prophet of consolation and hope. He is right ; no cowardly fears ! whatever happen, man will remain man. In his very nature, such as God has made it, there will ever be the revelations and the promises which produce beautiful lives and beautiful deaths. And what more is needed ? Happy the churches who shall find in their essential principles the right to open themselves without resolution to that imperishable Christianity of which Theodore Parker was the inspired preacher ! The fundamental truth which he maintained, namely, that in the last analysis everything rests on conscience ; that God reveals Himself to whosoever seeks after Him ; that the salvation of man and society, on earth as well as in heaven, depends not on dogmas, not on rites, not on miracles, not on priesthoods, nor on books, but on 'Christ in us' : on a pure and honest heart, on a loving soul, on a will devoted and active, — this truth will live and cause us to live with it. And the church for which he prayed, which shall be spacious enough to contain all the sincere, all the disinterested, all the morally great, all the innocent, and all the repentant — that Church, truly universal, which in the past already unites so many noble souls separated by barriers now tottering — that church will never perish. Even the death of the prophets would not for an hour retard the triumph of the truth which they preach, and the moment ever comes when humanity, confused and yet grateful, perceived that it was ignorantly stoning the organs of the Holy Spirit."

From Germany as early as 1856, Professor Gervinus, of Heidelberg, the eminent writer on the Philosophy of History, wrote of the introduction of Mr. Parker's writings and the interest felt there :—

“ HONORED SIR,—The lines from your own hand are so precious to me that I hasten thankfully to reply. The announcement in your letter that we already have the pleasure of *personally* knowing you—in fact, without being aware of it—took me not disagreeably by surprise. When we saw you at our house in 1844, it was, in fact, before we knew *who Parker was*; for it is only since the German translations of your writings that we have become acquainted with you—American books are so seldom sent to us. And, unfortunately, so many people pass through this little gathering-point of the great routes that the interesting visitors rejoice us less in the mass of indifferent ones; but that *you* should have been lost to us in this manner disturbs us greatly. It must, however, humiliating as it is, be confessed. My wife, who is an enthusiastic admirer of yours, was in a sort of despair. We rejoice every day at the happy idea of Herr Ziethen to translate your works. I hope that, gradually, this will have wide and deep results. We possess your liberal standpoint in theory, in learning, in the schools; we have it in the broad circle of the world, among all people of common sense; but we repel it from the place whence it ought to be taught and planted, so that morality and religion might not disappear *with* obscurantism. Everybody among us knows how it stands with the religious convictions of the majority, only the pulpit does not dare to say it; that is the domain of official hypocrisy. Consequently, the calling of the clergyman has been altogether cor-

rupted ; let sermons sound ever so high, the whole profession is one of the most despised in Germany. I hope that the impression of your discourses will be favorable to a practical theology among us. I can remark how much they have improved the orthodox themselves. I do what I can to circulate them, in order to make propaganda of the theologians."

In 1876, in an article on Theodore Parker and the Unitarians of Boston, *The Inquirer* said :—

"The fame of Theodore Parker and his noble work is growing more brilliant with every receding year. That Fugitive Slave Law itself was the Act of a northern statesman who was at least intimately connected with the Unitarian body, and was zealously upheld by statesmen and politicians and lawyers—especially of the Boston school—who were avowed Unitarians. That was a dark blot on the history of American Unitarians ; and it would be better to leave it in obscurity than drag it again to the light of day. But there was one great man —

" ' Faithful sound

Among the faithless, faithful only he  
Among innumerable false, unmoved,  
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,  
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal ;  
Nor numbers nor example with him wrought  
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,  
Though single.'

"And of Parker, as of Abdiel, it might also be said that—

" ' he passed

Long way through hostile scorn,  
*And with retorted scorn his back he turned.*'

When this man set himself to his life-work of withstanding and subverting to the foundation this gigantic iniquity ; when he not only thundered in the pulpit against the national sin, but armed himself to resist the Fugitive Slave Law even unto the death ; when all his acts and predictions are more than justified by that great result which was due chiefly to him and to reformers like him ; when all brave thinkers and true workers everywhere — except in Boston — have learned to love and revere his name, and are erecting a monument to his memory in their hearts, what can we think of the petty backbiting criticism, both here and in America, which makes it a serious charge against him — a strong ground for refusing to republish his greatest book — that he once said, half in jest, half in earnest, of some Unitarian ministers, 'stuff them with good dinners, and freedom, theology, religion, may go to the devil for all them' ? The real thing to be considered is, was it not *true* of some at least : and might not far worse things have been said of the Divines who practically exalted the laws of the Devil above the laws of freedom, conscience, and GOD?"

The twenty-three years which have passed from 1860 to 1883 have removed the name and fame of Theodore Parker from the roll of the workers, the thinkers, and the martyrs of the world to the position he will now hold. He has passed into history as one of the greatest Americans. His influence was manifold, his memory is now respected, if nothing more, and by many it is regarded as saintly.

Let the great leader have from distant lands and his own people just heed of praise and reward. Each year brings

him more before the people as a leader, a firm friend to humanity. These Lives have all their place, their value, and still there is room for more, for another work which shall appeal directly to the new circle of readers which has grown up in the last decade,—the readers who desire to know the motive power, the life-work, the personality, of the great Boston preacher who drew and held his thousands of hearers every Sunday for years,—who would have gone on, to triumphantly vindicate his position, as a single-minded, noble-hearted disciple of his Master if time had been granted him.

Early years of excessive bodily and mental toil, of actual privation for one of his mental and physical calibre, of exhausting thought and study, a middle life spent in a desperate struggle for the strength to do his earnest work, and the most intense devotion to the cause of freedom of thought in every path of life, made the days of this great, earnest thinker and worker comparatively short, yet into his fifty years were crowded the enthusiasm, the immense acquisition of knowledge, the ripened study of the fourscore years of the Psalmist. It was an ideal life in its force and intensity—the spirit of the enthusiast and the exact knowledge of the scholar united in it in a singular degree with the devotion to humanity which was so overpowering that the superficial and hasty multitude too often called him iconoclast, atheist, and many more opprobrious epithets because they thought in his love for mankind he forgot the Maker of all.

Years have brought greater breadth and tolerance, and to two English authors we owe excellent lives of Mr. Parker. The first, written by Peter Dean, appeared

in 1877, and this gentleman makes acknowledgment of indebtedness to the Lives by Weiss and Frothingham, with thanks for the assistance of James Martineau and other English friends of Mr. Parker. This biography is very attractively written, and the author has faithfully gathered from many sources all that could interest the reader. The book, as already stated, is dedicated to Frances Power Cobbe.

This last, but not least, sketch of Mr. Parker is interesting and attractive. It is not loaded with any superfluous details. It is brief, comprehensive, and clear in its conception. The outline is sharp and the portrait clear and accurate. The author has put into eight chapters the marked events of Mr. Parker's life without marring by compression the marvellous details of his industry, his study, his mental vigor, and his grand love of God and man. Where a larger work will have one reader, this will have a hundred, it is so admirably concise, fitting, and powerful, without wanting either picturesque and graphic touches or animated incidents. Thousands of minds feel Theodore Parker's influence, hundreds of writers and thinkers bear witness to his power; our library shelves teem with works upon his writings and his life, his name is one long to be remembered in our land. This English tribute to his worth and work must find a place in our homes and libraries far and near.

G. A. O.





THE STORY  
OR  
THEODORE PARKER.

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CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOME.

THE village of Lexington lies ten miles away from Boston, in the State of Massachusetts, and near Lexington not many years ago, stood a house among the meadows which was more than a century old. The doorsteps were worn by the tread of many feet, and old-fashioned latticed windows let air and sunshine into the low-roofed rooms. Pine trees shaded the house from the hot summer's sun; and in the background a wooded hill sheltered it from some of the winter's colder winds. Close at hand grew an orchard full of peach trees; while in front of the dwelling lay a little field, through which a narrow path led down to the wide

meadows. Beyond the meadows, far as eye could see, stretched a valley bounded by low hills, and watered by a merry brook which flowed into the River Charles, on its way to the distant sea.

What a valley that was! In summer, rich with soft mosses and blue gentians; in spring, with violets and tender anemones; in winter, white and dreary with deep snow-drifts; no living green to be seen but that of the great pine trees, bent and battered under the stormy winds.

In the old house lived a millwright, with his wife, his aged mother, and a large family of children. He was a hard-working, somewhat silent man; but he was known as a tender husband and father, a good son, and a faithful friend. All his neighbors respected him. He had lived among them for years, and his honest, sober way of life was so unlike that of many men who lived in Lexington, that it was a common saying in the village, "John Parker has all the manners of the neighborhood."

For this reason the millwright was often asked to settle disputes among the people of

the village ; and because he was known to be so honest and trusty, dying men sometimes found comfort in leaving John Parker as guardian to their orphan children. He was a hard-working man, too. Most of the day he might be found in the workshop at the back of the house making wheels, and barrows, and tubs. In the evening, when the day's work was done, he used to sit with his family in the old-fashioned kitchen. There he read, sometimes aloud, while his wife and daughters sewed and knitted, and the old grandmother nodded in her easy-chair by the fire. When the clock struck eight, he used to send the young ones to rest with a wave of his hand ; and before very long all the inmates of the house were fast asleep—for they were quiet people, with very simple, peaceful ways of life.

Thus one day passed away much like another, and it was very rarely that any of the family wandered out into the world beyond the blue "Milton hills" that bounded the valley where their home lay. But books gave them knowledge, if they gained none from travel, and these John Parker used to

borrow from the village library. For in those days Lexington had three public buildings—a library, a church, and a school-house. Very few volumes made up the wealth this library owned. About twelve new books, it is said, were added each year; yet to men living like the millwright, ten miles away from the nearest town, even the small store of a village library was worth much.

A farm lay near the old house, and John Parker's "boys" used to work upon this farm. It was only a small place and paid badly. The Parkers were poor people, so all their work must be done by their own hands. The girls helped their mother, and she was always to be found busy about the house, unless some neighbor was ill or in trouble and needed her help. Like her husband, Mrs. Parker was well known and loved in the village. Sometimes people wondered to find her so wise a woman, and her advice always so good; for she had little time to read, and she worked as hard as the poorest of her neighbors, though she was by no means a strong woman. The fact was, Mrs.

Parker's wisdom did not come from *books*. She *thought* as she went about her work, and her loving heart and firm trust in God made clear to her mind questions which were puzzles to people less faithful than herself. Her children believed, however, that no one knew so many wonderful, wild stories of the Indians, or beautiful old ballads, as their mother did. Her memory was good, and richly stored with legends and tales she had known and loved when she was a child herself. So fables, hymns, texts, and good thoughts of her own were, any and all of them, ready to help and cheer when they were wanted.

One August day in the year 1810, a new baby was born in John Parker's house, and the hearts of all the ten children were full of joy. Even the youngest little sister, five years of age, was old enough to welcome the little brother heartily, and by one consent he was named Theodore, or the "gift of God." He found many nurses and playfellows awaiting him, all ready to watch over and help him to grow happy and strong. Long after he could run alone, Mrs. Parker used to call him her baby; and every day, under his mother's lov-

ing influence, the boy learned without knowing it himself, to grow into good thoughts and habits, and into a strong and earnest faith.

“Mrs Parker, you’re spiling that boy of yours,” people sometimes used to say as a friendly warning, when they saw the little fellow so often sitting at his mother’s feet or running by her side; “he never can take care of himself when he grows up.” But Mrs. Parker knew better than this. The knowledge of his mother’s love made the boy sure of the guardian care of God about which she told him, and before he was three years old he was brave and fearless.

In summer-time he used to wander alone over the farm and fields, making friends with the birds and flowers. He loved to lie on the soft grass, watching the sunshine and the shadows made by the floating clouds, and drinking in the sweet-scented breeze. In winter he rushed about among the thick snow-drifts that lay heaped up by the fierce winds; or he played in the workshop and among the cows and horses in the barn. But always he loved the summer sights and sounds the

best. As he grew older, father, mother, brothers, and sisters were at hand to teach this little new comer, less wise than themselves, the meaning of the sights he saw about him on the fair face of earth, and help him to learn the book of Nature for himself.

One summer day, as Theodore was rambling about the farm in the bright sunshine, he stopped by the side of a pond to look at a lovely red flower growing on a plant in the moist soil at the water's edge. Beneath the sheltering leaves of the plant lay a spotted tortoise. Without a thought of the pain his act would give, the little fellow raised the stick which he held in his hand to strike the sleeping tortoise and make it wake and move. Suddenly, with the upraised stick still in the air, he seemed to hear a voice within him say clearly, "It is wrong."

Down dropped the stick, and away trotted Theodore back over the fields to find his mother, and ask her whence came the warning words he had just heard. Mrs. Parker lifted the breathless little lad on her knee, and listened to his eager tale. When it was ended, with her eyes wet with tears, she said :

“That voice that you have heard some men call conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen to it and obey it, it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear and disobey, then it will fade out little by little and leave you all in the dark. Your life depends on your heeding this little voice.”

From that day, though he was so young, the thought that he must listen to God’s voice within him became a part of his daily life, and, like the thought of his mother’s love, went everywhere with him. Like his brothers and sisters, he said a hymn and prayer each night; but the good thoughts did not end there. All through the day he learned to listen for the tiny whisper of conscience that never failed to tell him what was right or wrong, and so it came to pass that people knew if Theodore Parker said a thing, that thing *must* be true.

While still quite a small boy, like all the busy people about him, Theodore learned to work. His life, even when a child, was not to be all play in the sunny meadows and the

sheltered barn. He carried into the house chips and broken branches for the fires, drove the quiet cows to pasture, and carried grain to the oxen in their stalls. He waited also on the old grandmother at her meals, for this old lady lived most of her time in a little parlor upstairs; and when the older people were tired with their hard day's work, the active little grandson was always ready to run her errands and supply her wants.

A mile from Mr. Parker's house, along the country road, stood a small school-house close to the village. When he was six years old, Theodore was sent to this school every day for two years. After that time, until he was sixteen, he only went for twelve weeks in each year. The nicest and shortest way to the school lay across the fields; but a brook flowed through them, and the small boy had no good fairy ready to carry him across. With much labor he rolled some heavy stones into the brook, and crossed safely thus four times a day, with no help but that of his own hard-working little hands and feet.

A mistress, known by the name of "Aunt Pattie," taught the little children in the day

school. At first all that happened there was new and astonishing to the young scholar from the farm-house. For a week a pretty little girl was among the children. She was called Narcissa, and Theodore looked upon her as a dainty flower, or as one of the fairies that his mother's fables told about. He could not learn his lessons as he gazed at her pretty face and golden hair, and out of school he walked round her slowly, full of wonder, and was ready to do great deeds to help her or defend her from harm.

One morning as he was crossing the fields on his way to school, he met an old man with a long gray beard. The stranger turned back to walk with the little school-boy, who had such a merry and, at the same time, such an earnest face; and he spent the time they were together in telling Theodore of the clever man he might become if he tried, and of all he might do and be in later life. As they neared the school-house the old man went away, and Theodore never saw him again: but he did not forget the stranger's words. Again and again they came back to the boy's memory, and the wish grew strong

in him to become what he had been told he had the power to be.

Aunt Pattie left the school, and a master took her place. He was a poor teacher, and not at all the kind of man to gain any influence over the rough boys among his scholars. Even little Parker played a prank one day, which he would never have played if the master had been in earnest in his work. A quill popgun had been given to Theodore by one of his brothers. He took it to school one morning loaded with potato, and let it off with a loud pop, which made both master and scholars jump up in wonder. The plaything was burnt and the boy deserved to lose it. But that was the only time when his love of fun led him to give so bad an example to the school. He kept his merry ways for the playground, where he became the leader in all the games.

Sometimes, perhaps, he was rough in play; but he never bullied or teased a school-fellow, and always would see justice and fair play done wherever he was. The boys liked to follow such a brave, worthy leader in their play; and they had no better leader in their

work. His home lessons were always well learned, however many tasks he had; and, with the exception of a girl who was as hard-working as himself, Theodore was always at the head of the school.

In course of time the school examination was held. The small school-house was filled with scholars and their friends. The millwright, John Parker, was there, and all the school committee. Little Theodore Parker was always ready with an answer to the examiner's questions.

"Who is that fine boy who spoke up so well?" said one to John Parker, when the examination was over. Theodore heard the question asked, and he heard his father answer, with a smiling face: "That is one of my boys—the youngest." It made his heart glad to see his father look so proud and happy; and he thought once more, as he had often thought before, that he would try with all his might and main as he grew older to be and do the very wisest and best he could.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FARMER'S BOY.

A COUNTRY boy leaving school when he was eight years old! Theodore Parker was this boy. How could he ever hope to become a great man? We shall see how he managed to carry out his wish, for "where there's a will there's a way."

In summer a great deal of work could be done on Mr. Parker's farm even by a small boy; and sometimes *this* small boy tried to do work much too heavy for his strength. One day he was helping to lay a new wall. Great, heavy stones were wanted to build with, and one after another he lifted them and carried them to the place, never caring when his back ached and he felt faint and tired. He was brave and full of spirit; but not quite wise enough to know when he harmed himself by overtasking his strength; and the strain of that day's work he often felt in future years.

One sunny day the peaches on the orchard trees were ripe, and ready to be gathered. Theodore's father and brothers were all busy in the workshops and on the farm. No one could be spared to take the precious fruit to market at Boston, ten miles away. What was to be done? The fruit would spoil, and the money they had hoped to gain by its sale would be lost. To the surprise of all, up sprang the little lad, always ready to help, and cried out: "Send me! I will sell the fruit at Boston!" And the older people knew they could trust him to be careful and do the errand well.

Next morning the family waited at the farm-yard gate to see Theodore, and a companion as young as himself, set off on their way to Boston. Father, mother, sisters, and brothers,—we can fancy them standing there; some anxious, some laughing, and all waving their farewells as the rosy-faced little driver takes the reins, and pats the horse that is to draw the cart-full of baskets of ripe fruit. On the journey to town no one could lead him to play, or to be careless about his charge; and at the market no one would try to cheat

the honest looking little fellow, who was so anxious to sell his fruit and so careful to give just weight to every buyer. He was very happy when he brought home the well-earned money and the empty cart at night. It was the best thing in the world to him to have been trusted and useful.

As Theodore grew older, of course he was able to do still more work on the farm. There was not much variety in his life each day ; but great pleasure came to him in little ways. A piece of work ended and well done made him happy ; and the sight of a red sunset sky, and the green, bursting buds in spring, made him ready to sing with joy. He liked to watch the growth of a plant, or to study the ways of the animals on the farm. Indeed, he made friends of the cattle, just as he had done when, only a small boy, he played among them in the barns in wintry weather. He never thought them stupid because he could not read their thoughts ; and, by watching them, he learned to understand their habits and ways, and even to fancy he could interpret their dealings with each other. Very often the stories he told of his dumb

friends made the family circle merry ; but never did he fancy anything about them that could waken any thoughts in human minds but those of love and pity.

Thus he found many new objects to interest him. Yet they were what some people would call "common things." If he asked the country people about him questions as to the reason or history of anything that he saw, they often answered: "I dunno." But such answers only made him think the more, and so he went on learning every day.

Each winter for three months there was little farm work to be done. Then Theodore could go to school again. So through fierce snow-storms and biting winds he crossed the fields each day, and was always the best scholar in Lexington school-house. When spring came, and he had to go back to work, the schoolmaster offered to lend him books that he might study whenever he could. This schoolmaster's name was White, and he was a very different man from the poor teacher who took Aunt Pattie's place a few years before. Theodore owed him much, and never forgot the debt. Dearly he loved

the memory of this friend in later years ; and it was one of the happiest deeds of his life then, to be able to help the orphan children of the man who had influenced his own boyhood so greatly.

So in spring days the farm-boy, as he guided the plow, said over to himself the lessons he had learned during the winter months at school ; and when other workers lay sleeping during dinner-time under the shade of the trees, he read page after page of his schoolmaster's books and learned new lessons. No odd moments were wasted. Early in the summer morning, and when the work was done at night, Theodore found time to read, and his father often marveled at the number of books he knew all about, of which he could give a clear account when asked.

But there was one book he could not borrow ; and this he must have. It was a Latin dictionary. In some way he must get together money enough to buy it. But he would not ask his hard-working father for the money. What could he do ? A bright thought came to his mind. Ripe whortle-

berries hung upon the bushes in the fields. These he might gather and sell, if he could only find time to do so. So, very early in the morning before the sun had fairly risen, and while the heavy dew lay upon the grass and hedgerows, he sprang out of bed and was out in the meadows while other people still lay resting after the hard work of the previous day.

In this way, Theodore gathered many baskets of whortleberries ready for Boston market, and yet he was able to begin his day's work when his fellow-workers came out on the farm. That Latin dictionary, when he got it, was a precious book to him. It was the first book he had earned for himself, and the first book of the large library which he afterwards gathered round him by degrees. Those hard-working days were very happy days to look back upon in later life, and while they lasted there was no happier boy in all that country-side than the youngest son of the millwright of Lexington.

One winter the young people of the village planned together to make the long, cold evenings merry by dancing. But farm-boys

and country girls did not know how to dance, and must first be taught. The older people, their fathers and mothers, glad to give them pleasure, hired a teacher for them, and paid him for all the pupils he taught. Theodore's father was ready to join with the other farmers near Lexington in this plan, and Theodore had quite enough love of fun to enjoy all the merry times that would have followed for him if he had learned to dance. But he loved something else more than he loved fun; and with the money with which he might have learned to dance, he asked his father to send him for a few weeks to the new Academy which had been opened in Lexington, and which was a much better school than the little village school he had been used to go to. In the Academy for those few weeks he worked at Latin and Greek and Algebra; and while his young companions danced and made merry at night, he sat at home with his much-loved books.

Now perhaps it may seem as if Theodore Parker must have been rather a dull playfellow, and as if the country boys and girls about Lexington would not regret his ab-

sence from their sports. But this was not the case. He was a favorite everywhere. His merry laugh made the farm-house cheerful, and lightened the cares of the millwright and his wife. This youngest boy was very dear to all his brothers and sisters, and one and all they were certain that he would grow up no common man. But far better than his merry ways, which every one liked, was the knowledge that he might always be trusted, and that still, just as when he was a younger boy, if Theodore Parker said a thing, that thing *must* be true.

Year after year passed away, each one spent by him much as the last had been. In 1828, he was eighteen years old. Then came a change. That winter he became what was called a "winter schoolmaster," and earned money by teaching a school just when there was little work to be done on the farm. He earned in this way enough money to pay for his board, and to hire a laborer to do any thing on the farm that might have fallen to his lot if he had stayed at home; and while he taught he still found time to read and, best of all, to think.

At last came the time when he must settle what his future work in life as a man should be. Not that of a millwright or farmer. So all his friends were certain. When a boy, he used to think he should like best to be a preacher; he should like in this way to help to make the world a better and a wiser place. Now as a young man he still thought a preacher's work was the best kind of work. But his friends said sermons were dull and churches were always half empty, and though preachers might be good men, yet they seldom made any mark in the world.

So some people proposed one plan, and some another. Meanwhile, he thought the matter over, and as he did the daily duties that came in his way, his future prospects also became clear. He had no doubt that the fancy of his boyhood had been no mistake. He would become a preacher of all that seemed to him to be true and right; and, whatever other men might do or say, he would try to practise what he preached, that his life might help on the world as well as his words. This he would do, and leave results to God.

But now came another puzzle. Before he could teach other men he must learn much more himself, and his father was too poor to send him to college and pay the college fees. Well, summer came, and in the year 1830 he was at home again working on the farm as before, plowing and digging, and mending wheels and wagons, reading at odd moments, and thinking as he went about his work.

One sunny day in August he asked his father to give him a holiday on the morrow. Early in the morning, when the rising sun was just beginning to chase the shadows from the earth, he set out from the farm. It was a new thing for Theodore to want a holiday, and every one wondered what he was going to do with it; but they knew that sooner or later he would tell them all about it; so they asked no questions and were content to wait.

While the usual morning's work went on at the farm, he was walking along the dusty road to Boston; and before the great heat of the day had come he had reached the city. A little way from Boston

stood a long red-brick building, with fields before it, and an avenue of trees leading to the great hall-door. Up this avenue went the tired holiday-maker; and, knocking at the door when it was opened to him, he entered in. More than fifty years have passed since Theodore Parker took his holiday on that sunny August day; but still the long red-brick building is standing near Boston, and is more famous in these days than it was in his time. This building was Harvard College. To it young men went, as they do now, to study and be trained for useful work in the world. But first a hard examination must be passed, and then must follow two or three years of study.

What made Theodore Parker come out again later in the day with such a joyful look upon his face? He had found out the worth of his few years of study in the village school, and of his self-teaching and thought in the winter evenings, and behind the plow. That morning, he, the farm-boy, with his few chances, had passed the hard examination! There was the first step in his new path of life; other steps must follow.

Back along the dusty highroad, in the fading evening light, but with a happier heart than when he had walked along it in the bright morning sunshine to Boston. He entered the farm-house door, and ran upstairs to the room where his old father, tired with the day's work, had gone to rest.

"Father," he said, "I have passed the examination and entered Harvard College to-day."

The old man was amazed. After a little time, he replied, sadly: —

"But, Theodore, I cannot afford to keep you there."

"No, father," said the light-hearted youth; "I'm going to stay at home and read, and still keep up with my class."

So Theodore Parker's holiday ended. Before long, hard work and brave days began for him in a new life.

## CHAPTER III.

### UNKNOWN WORKERS.

It was no easy course that Theodore had planned for himself. He had only passed the first college examination so far ; others would follow, and as he had no money he meant to read at home and make ready for them. In the end must come some college fees. How was he to find money to pay them ? At first he worked on the farm just as he had been used to do and read at all the odd moments he could find ; but these odd moments were rare, and now that he knew what the work and his future life must be, he must press on.

In twelve months' time he agreed to become a teacher in a Boston school. In such a life he would have more chance to study than on the farm, and some of the money he earned could go to pay a laborer in his place. The day came when he must leave the old home where he had lived for

twenty-one years. How dear every place was to him! Each nook in the fields was filled with happy memories, and he loved every room in the old house. Now he must leave it all, and his heart clung fondly to the friends with whom he had so far spent his life.

When the spring buds were bursting into leaf and flower, Theodore said good-bye to all and went out into the world. He was only an awkward looking country lad, in rough farming garments, and he set out for his city life with a few more clothes and two or three books in one wooden trunk. There was nothing wonderful in his look or manner: no promise of future greatness to be seen in him; but he left heavy, aching hearts behind, for father, mother, brothers, and sisters all knew what he had been to them in his own home. It was a hard parting, but it must take place, and all knew it was for the best. So they watched him down the long country road, as they had watched him when a little lad he went to sell the peaches in Boston market; and at length the winding hedge-rows hid him from their straining eyes.

No bright life awaited him at Boston. He loved work, and truly he found enough there, with six hours' teaching and ten or twelve hours' study every day. But sad longings for home and friends used to visit him in his lonely lodging, and he pined in his new life for some one to love and care for. It seemed to him that more than anything else he cared for love; not so much to be loved, as for some object on which his great, tender heart could pour itself forth. He had had so many dear ones at home, and in this great city of Boston he was alone among strangers. In those days he took little sleep and seldom any exercise. Often he did not himself know the lessons he had to teach; and through the quiet hours of the night he kept himself awake to study, and he wanted no rest from his toil. One aim was always before him—to prepare for his future work.

On Sundays he went to a crowded church in the city. How different from the quiet little village church at home, to which he used to walk through the meadows with dear friends and old companions. In this city church he heard hard doctrines preached—

threats of an angry judge, and of future misery, if men did not believe an appointed creed. To himself he said, that if ever he became a preacher people should hear from him of a tender Father, and of the need for a holy, loving life, instead of belief in a creed.

Day after day he went on working bravely until months passed, and still he saw no prospect beyond his daily teaching in the school, and knew that the little money he earned in this way would never take him to college. But God helps those who help themselves, and suddenly a new way opened out to him. Not many miles from Boston lies the village of Watertown. A school was needed there, and Theodore was asked to open one there himself. He gladly agreed to do so, and before long went to Watertown to make ready.

A short way from the village of Watertown stood an old disused bake-house. Before its door lay broad green fields, and round about its walls sheltering trees waved their branches in the gentle breezes, and made a home for many a bird whose songs filled the old empty

house with music. Rather a tumble-down building it was ; still, there Theodore meant to open his school ; so he hired it, and then set to work to saw planks and join them together for forms and desks. This done, after many days' work, he swept out the room and lighted the fire and began his school with two scholars. But he put his whole heart into this work as into all he did, and boys and girls could not help learning when he was their teacher. Before long he had fifty-four children in his school.

Now he had no longer a sad longing for some one to love and care for. Poor as he was, he could help those who were poorer than himself, and he never turned a child from his school-door because no fee was brought. He even searched the village for children who were too poor to pay. He taught and helped them all alike, and they learned to love him so heartily that their happiest hours were those they spent with him. Sometimes he took them long rambles in the fields and woods, and then the best lessons they learned were not from printed pages ; for he found for them " sermons in

stones, and books in the running brooks." Above all, he taught them more by what he was himself than by his words. Boys and girls who knew Theodore Parker grew true and earnest, because they felt him to be so, and longed to be like him. Even idle scholars laid aside their idleness, and made no complaints of the hard tasks he asked from them, lest they should disappoint the hopes he had formed of them. Now all this time, while he was training his young scholars, he himself was growing. The story of his life would be of little use to us if it told us of a man who had no battles to fight and no mistakes to learn from. The grand thing about him was that he was always in earnest and always tried to do the duty that lay nearest and seemed the clearest. Therefore clearer and clearer did the light shine upon his duties as the years went on, and nobler and better grew his life.

One day a colored girl came to the school-house door and asked to be taught. Theodore cared nothing for outside appearance: the color of the skin, or the fit of the clothes, mattered not to him. He saw this girl had the will to learn and he took her in at once.

Next morning he was surprised to hear from many parents of his scholars that their children must leave his school if the black girl were not sent away at once.

A few years later, Theodore Parker would have seen a great principle here to which he must be true. He would have kept and taught the colored girl, even though he had ruined his school. *Now* in his earnestness he only saw the work to which he had given himself up. He must make a good school-master, and he must earn money to take him to college in the future. Sorrowfully he sent the child away. In a few years he was ready to give up home and life to defend one such colored girl as had come to his school-door in Watertown. This is one instance of the way in which this American farmer's boy grew wiser. He always tried to do what he thought right; but, by degrees, fresh light came to him, and he saw new duties to be done and wider ways of helping the world than he had seen before.

Now just at this time there came to Boston an unknown youth, a stranger such as Theodore himself had been, and something of his

story must be told, for, in course of time, his influence acted on Theodore Parker, and helped to lead him into fresh paths of life and work.

Twenty-five years before, there had lived in the little town of Newburyport a brave sea-captain named Garrison, with his wife. Newburyport was built beside the sea-coast, and the great waves of the Atlantic Ocean came dashing up in spray and foam upon the cliffs, and the stormy winds roared round the town when the captain's boat was far away out at sea. But the captain's wife was as brave as himself. She was a good woman, and her faith was strong. So when the storms were fierce she only prayed the more, and knew that all was right.

Now these people had one only boy, and being very poor they put him to a trade when he was so little that he could hardly hold the tools he had to use. At first he was with a shoemaker. But in the end they sent him to a printer, and he learned to set type, and the printer's office served him both for school and college that richer boys attend. By-and-by he began to write articles for the

paper his master published, and surprised him by the knowledge shown by a boy thus self-taught.

A few years passed and the boy became a youth. Both his parents died. Then, in a town among the distant "Green Mountains," in Vermont, he set on foot a paper of his own. For this paper he had always one aim in view. Through its means he wanted to spread a love of temperance among the people who read it, for he had found out what sad homes and ruined lives a love of drink caused among men. So this was the purpose of his life at that time, and he worked for it with all his might.

Now a strange looking old man used to travel on foot at that time through Vermont and other States with a heavy pack of papers on his back, day after day selling copies of the paper which he published himself by the help of money collected as he walked. But this paper had a different aim from that of Garrison. Long years ago, when a boy, he had been shocked by the dreadful sight of slaves torn from their friends and driven in chains to be sold to

new slavery down the River Ohio. Benjamin Lundy, as the boy was called, never afterwards forgot this first sight of the cruelties of slavery. As he grew older he learned more about it, and he vowed to spend his life in doing all he could to make America a free country.

So here were two men, a young man and an old one, each trying to mend the world in different ways by the papers that they wrote. Before long these two men were to meet and join together in a common cause. For Benjamin Lundy heard one day of young Garrison working so hard with his printing-press among the Green Mountains of Vermont; and he set off on a long tramp over hill and dale, with his pack on his back, to beg the youth to help him to fight against the great crime of slavery which filled their native land with wrong.

The young man agreed to the old man's wish. He left the old cause and took up the new one; and truly in great earnest was William Lloyd Garrison. The spirit of his father, the brave old sea-captain, filled him, and right into the heart of the Slave States

he went, and printed and published his anti-slavery paper. Then, it is said, he wakened the land with his bold words and his warning cry that slavery must end *at once*. Thoughtless people could no longer help asking themselves whether slavery were right or wrong. He wakened the slave-owners, too, who on some pretext seized him and threw him into prison for his brave, outspoken words.

For weeks Garrison lay in prison. At length a New York merchant paid his fine and set him free. Then, knowing there was no chance to be heard in the Slave States any more, he went to Boston, just about the time when Theodore Parker left his father's house to begin his work in the world. In a small gloomy garret, with only a small negro boy to help him, living on bread and water, and unknown in Boston, Garrison set on foot a new paper called the *Liberator*, which was to make the Northern people, who bought and spun the slave-grown cotton, learn that to keep slaves was a crime. Again and again he said to himself: "I am in earnest. I will not retreat an inch I *will* be heard."

Was not this a man after Theodore

Parker's own heart? Both were living heartily for the duty nearest to them, and the work that must be done. But as yet they had not met.

Meanwhile, there lived in Watertown a minister named Dr. Francis. The Charles River flowed by his pretty home, and a garden gay with flowers lay round the house. Dr. Francis was a lover of books, and his wife was a lover of flowers, and they were never at ease and happy unless they were on the watch to find some one whom they could help. They heard of the hard-working young schoolmaster, Theodore Parker, who wanted to go to college, and they asked him to their house. Fresh interests now opened out to him. He went to Dr. Francis's church, and taught in his Sunday School, and soon a bright hope dawned upon him. For he learned to know and love a young girl named Lydia Cabot, who afterwards became his wife. Often he gathered wild flowers for her by the river's bank, and as he walked alone, dreams mingled with the music of the rushing waters of a home that they might some time make together.

It was a joyful day when he first found that Lydia cared for him, and he went back to the old farm-house at Lexington to tell his friends there his good news. Life began to seem very rich to him, for his new love brightened all his works and ways. Still he worked as hard as ever to prepare for the college examination, and often the early morning light broke and found him still reading, as he had read through the long sleepless night.

There is a story told of a countryman far away in the Black Forest, who once spent many years in carving a grand statue out of hard pine wood. Many hindrances came in his way, knots in the wood and disappointments in his tools. But at last the work was done, and he looked upon a perfect image before he died. This story tells of another kind of carver: of a boy who vowed to himself to carve out a noble character before he died. Like a block of pine wood lay his life before him, and we have seen him carve some deep, hard strokes already. We shall see what kind of a character he had carved out for himself by the time death came.

## CHAPTER IV.

### BARNSTABLE AND WEST ROXBURY.

✓ ONE morning there was great excitement among the children in Theodore Parker's school-house. Heads were bent together over the desks, and never before had there been low whispers over the books. Something was plainly the matter, and it was plain, also, that the young master saw all that went on, and took no notice. The morning wore away and the school broke up. Then the mystery was explained. Because it was the last day on which he should teach his school, the children had got ready a parting present to give him,—a silver cup,—and the eldest boy was to present it and to act as spokesman for the rest. For two years Theodore had been their master, and it was no easy matter for any of them to say good-bye to him or for him to say good-bye to them. In fact, when the great moment came, and the silver cup was given, and

the little speech made, master and children alike burst into tears.

At length the time had come when he had earned enough money, thanks to the hard life and ceaseless work, to enter Harvard College. There he could still live on the plainest food, and still go on teaching until he had passed the last examination and was ready for his new work in life. So, for two years and three months, he went to Harvard, and quickly did the time pass away. Well might his friends be proud of the hard-working student, who had made his own way to college, and now took such a high place among his college companions. He was a wonder to many who saw him living on poor food and giving himself no holidays from the tasks he undertook. In the hottest summer day no tempting country walk won him from his books, and when other men amused themselves, he gave lessons to help to pay his college fees, or sometimes went to the great prison near Boston to teach the prisoners confined within its walls.

Yet he was always ready at odd times for a talk with other students, and his merry

laugh and genial ways made him a favorite with every one. At Harvard the students used to meet together for debates. Then they chose a subject, and made speeches upon it. How was it, they wondered, that the new student, Theodore Parker, who at first seemed so shy, was soon the best scholar of them all? The reason was that he never stopped to think, as some of the others did, which argument would sound best or be most liked. He spoke always straight out of his heart just what he knew was true and right. Therefore his words carried weight with them. In everything he said and did, he never forgot the lesson learned so many years before by the pond where the sleeping tortoise lay, and always he listened for the gentle whisper of conscience as his guide.

When the time came for him to leave Harvard, and he was ready for new work, he only waited a call to some church to be its preacher. Meanwhile, as he waited, he took a short holiday among his friends. One Sunday he preached for the first time in the village church near his old home at

Lexington. The country people who had known him as a boy, gathered together to listen to him, and his heart was glad when he met his old companions again. They were all proud of his success, and to know that his work so far had ended well. To some of them it seemed that now he had left college his hardest days were over. To himself, however, it seemed that life's work was only beginning, and to himself he said: "Blessed be these iron times in which there is something for a man to do; something for a man to think. I have sterner deeds to do; greater danger to bear. I must be about my work." And so, in the midst of holiday time, while enjoying friends and sunshine and flowers, he still longed for work, and often thought, "I must have something to do. I must be about new work."

On the sea-coast of the State of Massachusetts, a small village called Barnstable was growing up at this time. The village road wound among little wooden houses brightly painted green, red, yellow, and white. Behind the village rose a steep, rough hill, and in front lay the wide bay on which the

hardy fishermen sailed out in all weathers to make a living for their families. In 1836, just when Theodore was leaving Harvard, the people of Barnstable wanted a minister, and they asked him to come and fill their pulpit for a month.

He agreed to do so, and one evening reached the bright looking village and looked over the bay far out towards the distant, shining sea. He liked the place at once, but it seemed to him that the fishing-people were too reserved and shy. They had not much to say to him, and even on Sundays in the little church he fancied that their hymns and prayers were cold and dull. But, by degrees, he grew more used to the ways of the people of Barnstable, and they learned to trust him and to feel at home with him. First of all, he made friends, as in old times, of the animals about the place. He liked to climb the hill, too, and to wander among the fields. Then one after another he found friends among the men and women in their village homes, and learned to honor them for their patience in their trouble, and for their faithful, hard-working lives.

One day news came to Barnstable that a strange sight was to be seen in the woods across the bay. Theodore Parker, with one of his friends, set sail in a small vessel to make a visit to the woods. His boat was cast upon a sand bank near the shore to which it was bound. Leaving it there, the two men made their way up to the woods, which gave a cool and pleasant shadow from the heat and the midday sun. Quiet and restful places did they look from the shore. But as the travelers from Barnstable came nearer to them the sound of many voices reached them from among the trees; and there when the underwood was passed, they reached a grassy glade where sixteen large tents were pitched round a rough, hastily built pulpit. Behind the tents horses and oxen were tied to the trunks of trees, and strange looking carts and carriages were to be seen, while the whole glade was filled with people who had met together to hold a "camp meeting," as a church held in the open air was called.

Theodore and his friend listened as one preacher after another gave a sermon to the

crowd. Loud hymns were sung, and through the long prayers the people shouted and wept, and even laughed in their excitement, and hoped to hear the "still, small voice of God" in answer to their noisy calls. Theodore thought of his quiet fishing-people at Barnstable, whom he had once fancied cold and dull. He pictured them doing their duty fearlessly on the rough sea, and finding the Lord in their work at home, and in their humble prayers and hymns. Their worship seemed to him much holier than that of this "multitude that kept holiday," and he thought much about them as he walked home to Barnstable along the lonely road for thirty miles under the quiet starlit sky.

Quickly the days passed by, and the month he was to spend at Barnstable came to an end. The fishermen would gladly have kept their new preacher with them always; but though he had made many friends among them, Barnstable was not the kind of place in which he wished to spend his life. So he took leave of the people and wandered forth again, preaching first in one place, then in another, and longing for some resting-place and for some settled work.

In the longest day of 1837, he found both resting-place and work at West Roxbury, a village near Boston. Then he married Lydia Cabot, and together they began the home they had planned to make. West Roxbury was a pretty country place, and the minister's house lay in a pleasant garden, bright with flowers and vines, and sheltered by well-grown trees. Close to the garden ran the long village road, with the homes of the poor people among whom the new minister's work would lie. But very near, also, were the houses and gardens of people who were somewhat better off in this world's goods. They, too, became friends of Theodore Parker and his wife, and with them were spent many happy hours, either in their well-ordered homes or in the sunny meadows that lay round West Roxbury.

Theodore Parker had a great love for little children. Tiny feet soon learned to make their way from his neighbors' houses to his own; tiny fingers often tapped at his study-door, and baby voices called out "Parkie, Parkie," at the key-hole, and made music in his quiet home. He had pet names for the

little visitors — such as "mites o' Teants'" and "pets o' blossom." Stores of playthings, carts and dolls and wooden horses, were kept for them to play with near his writing-table. Even on his journeys he carried little presents in his pockets to charm and soothe any cross little traveler in a railway carriage or steamer. In a year or two after their marriage he and his wife took into their home as their adopted child a little orphan boy named Charles Cabot. By all these means he tried to make up for the want of children in his own happy home, and as months passed by the love of the husband and wife grew daily stronger and more deep.

But before this life at West Roxbury began dear old ties were broken. There were empty places in the farm-house at Lexington, and it was only on rare occasions that Theodore could bear to speak of the old days at home, and of the dear ones whom he should see no more on earth.

Sometimes the fear came to him that in this quiet village life he was not using all his powers. Really, however, this time, when he seemed to have few chances for work and

influence, was rich in preparation for the future. He read books of all sorts, and thought much; and he learned lessons of wisdom from the lives of the ignorant country people about him. Just opposite his house, across the village street, lived a poor farm laborer, with his wife and five young children. This man had hard work to earn money for his rent, and for the needful food and clothes for his family, and while he worked on the farm his wife toiled at home all day. Some new people named Wallace came to live in the village. No one knew anything about them; yet they sadly needed friends; for the mother was dying of consumption, and was too weak to take care of her two little children, while the father was away at his work all day. It was not long before Theodore's opposite neighbors heard of these new comers. Then the busy mother of the five children left her own home and work to see how she could help in so sad a case. She soon saw what was most wanted, and bringing the baby to her own crowded home, lest the sick woman should be disturbed by its cries, she went back again to wash the clothes and

do the work of the neglected house. Then, night after night, when her own children were asleep, she sat up to nurse the stranger who had no friends to look to her in her own home.

Theodore Parker saw all this done. He saw, too, how another well-meaning person in the village, who cared more for the *creed* she held than for a loving life, went also to the poor home in this time of trouble. But this second visitor only frightened the poor, weak woman with the views she herself held, and drove sleep from her with tales of a belief which her ignorant mind failed to understand. Most clear it was to Theodore that true religion is shown best by gentle, tender deeds. He thought of the noisy camp meeting in the woods, and of the quiet worship of the duty-loving fishermen of Barnstable. He remembered, too, the city church in Boston, where he had heard the hard, dreary creeds preached, and he taught his people of West Roxbury that "God's Church is to be found wherever his children reach out their loving hands by help and service to each other."

So the peaceful days passed by, spent amid books and thoughts and experiences of life. By-and-by the narrow village path thus faithfully trodden led Theodore Parker out into the broad field of the world. In this way, step by step, the best and bravest lives are built up.

## CHAPTER V.

### SEEKERS OF THE TRUTH.

THE village church in which Theodore preached each Sunday was only a small building, and he had few hearers. On sunny mornings the shadows of the trees outside were cast through the windows on the walls within, and songs of birds came in through the open doorway, and mingled with the hymns the people sang. For the most part the men and women who came to worship there were simple country people. They walked through the lanes from their cottages and farms, glad to listen to simple sermons about their every-day lives. For in Theodore Parker's eyes even the commonest work was noble. The milking of a cow, or the brushing of a floor, were great and holy duties—so he thought; and he used to tell his people of the high aims that may glorify even the humblest lot, and of the strength God gives to lowly souls that obey His guiding voice in *little* things.

A stream flowed down from the hills through the woods and fields near West Roxbury. It leaped over rocks, and rushed down its channel on the steep hillside till it reached the meadows near the village, where ferns and reeds bent over it, and saw their images reflected in the peaceful stream. Happy children used to play beside this brook on summer days, sailing their little wooden and paper boats upon it. In one place on the bank stood an old water mill. There wondering boys and girls used to stand sometimes beside the great wheel, and watch how the running water turned it slowly round to grind the miller's corn.

Some of these children may have been in the church one Sunday morning when Theodore Parker spoke in his sermon of this great mill wheel. Perhaps they knew what he meant when he went on to say that, as this ever-flowing stream from the hills above gave the miller's wheel power to grind his corn, so God's strength would flow into every human soul that turned itself in prayer to Him. In just this sort of way did Theodore Parker find a beautiful meaning in the com-

mon things of life, and try to bring thoughts of Heaven into the daily ways of men.

It often seemed to him that people made a great mistake in thinking that the Bible told them of lands and times that were holier than their own could be. He wanted them to be sure that God was close to them in their own lives, speaking in their hearts, as he has spoken in the hearts of prophets long ago; so that when they felt sure a thing was right to do or say, they might say of their own consciences, which told them so, "Thus saith the Lord."

Such thoughts as these came to him in his quiet country life. They grew clearer and stronger as time went on; and other thoughts followed them, which he knew he must some time give as his message to the world. The time to do so had not yet come however; and while he waited he grew strong in faith and courage. It was well he grew thus strong, for great troubles lay before him. By-and-by men were to give him the hard name of heretic,—and names even harder to bear than that,—because he turned from the old ways of thought that the world had so long held dear.

Theodore Parker was not the only man in Massachusetts who began to turn to new thoughts in those days. Books were coming over to America from England and Germany. They brought with them new forms of belief and fresh ideas. People who read these books began to question their own minds afresh, and to turn from the teachings of their senses only, and of old customs, to the teachings of "innate ideas," as they called the reason and judgment planted within them.

These people called themselves "Friends of Progress." Some of them were young and had made as yet no name in the world. Some were old, and were great leaders to young Theodore Parker. One of these was Dr. Channing, whom we hold in loving memory now for his good words and holy life. Once upon a time, when Theodore's heart was heavy, some words from Dr. Channing cheered him, and sent him bravely on his way again. "Give my love to Theodore Parker," said the wise elder man, "and tell him to preach what he thoroughly believes and feels. Let the full heart pour itself forth."

But this happened after the time we are now reading about. Every week these Friends of Progress used to meet in Boston to talk of subjects that were not quite clear to their minds. Theodore was one of the youngest of this band. Before long, however, few of his companions were ready to follow in their thoughts where his words led.

Nor was it only the wise men of Boston who were thus awake. Across the waters of the sheltered bay, where three hundred years before the Puritan Fathers, persecuted at home, had found a safe refuge for their new faith, lay Cape Cod. Hardy fishermen lived on Cape Cod, who spent their days in fishing on the bay, or on the rough waves of the Atlantic Ocean, which beat upon their eastern coast. Lying out on the waves in their fishing-boats, waiting for wind or tide, these people found time to think. Amid the terrors of the storm and perils of the sea, life was a very *real* thing to them; and, like Theodore Parker, they thought men lived too much in past times, and did not feel God present in every moment of their lives.

These fishers of Cape Cod called themselves "Come Outers," because they had come out of all churches to worship God in a way of their own. They used to say that in every home people ought to pray as in a temple; that all days are the Lord's days—not only Sundays which men have set apart from the rest of the week. Theodore went about among the Cape Cod men, and when he saw how they tried to make *all* life religious, he thought their ways were very good ways, though they belonged to no church and held no special creed.

Now the village of West Roxbury was, as has been said, a quiet country place; but not many miles away lay the busy city of Boston, and further south the still larger city of New York. News came to the quiet village from these noisy cities, where men lived closely packed in dingy, narrow streets: tales came of sin and sorrow that went on there, and of wars and crimes in the great world beyond. Theodore Parker had a friend named George Ripley, living near Boston in a pretty home with many books and pictures about him, and everything to make life gay and pleasant.

But it made George Ripley so sad to hear these tales of the sin and trouble among the people in great cities, that he lost all joy in his own happy life, and thought the best way to mend the world would be to set the example of a way of living in which there should be neither very rich nor very poor. So he sold his pretty home, and formed a little colony called Brook Farm, where he and his wife, and some other people who thought like himself, had all things in common, and worked together on their daily wants.

Brook Farm lay just one mile from Theodore Parker's house. Often he crossed the meadows to see and talk with these friends of his; there he used to find them busy plowing and sowing, cooking and washing; but they did not forget that their minds must be fed as well as their bodies. And when evening came books and music had their turn, and all enjoyed them together like one large family.

These people had given up their wealth and pleasant homes to try to teach the world the nobleness of daily toil, and to

lessen the great division between the rich and poor. Theodore honored them because they were so nobly true to what seemed right to them; but he did not think they had found the true way yet in which to mend the sins and sorrows of the world.

One night a great meeting was to be held at Harvard College. Ralph Waldo Emerson, famous in those days, though he became much more famous afterwards, was going to lecture to the students there. Hundreds of other people went to listen, and Theodore, who loved the long, low, red-brick building in whose walls he had learned so much, went also with his wife to hear what the wise man would say. Mr. Emerson was one of the Friends of Progress, and he had something he wanted to tell the Harvard students about the duties of a Christian preacher and the help the Christian Church should give the world. It would take long to tell all he said that night; some people were surprised and even shocked, and some were glad. Theodore was glad, and as he went home he felt sure that at last the time had come when he must preach his message to the world.

But he knew that in doing so he should grieve many dear old friends, for people were not then used to hear the sort of things he had to say; and when he asked counsel of one or two wise and trusted men, they answered him thus: "Keep silent; you will do no good by telling all you think; you will frighten your hearers and bring evil on yourself." This was a warning to which many men who longed to live in peace, as he longed, would have listened. But to him another voice seemed to speak, and it said: "Do the best, be the best, and say the best, you can"; and back to him over the long years came the memory of his mother's words: "Your life depends on your heeding this little voice."

So Theodore Parker made up his mind to speak out all the truth he knew. First in the village church at West Roxbury he told the simple people some of these thoughts of his. All his words were always good to them, and they came to thank him for the new light he had thrown for them upon the Bible. But it was quite another matter when, in a great, crowded church, in Boston, he preached his

mind out to strangers. From that time men gave him the name of heretic and unbeliever, and turned away from him when they met him in the streets. Preachers refused to let him speak in their pulpits, and old companions grieved his loving heart by their coldness and refusal of his outstretched hand. And what had Theodore Parker, with his loving, reverent heart, said that could shock and wound the people of Boston in those days? A few words will tell, and if we cannot now think like him, we must still honor him for his truthfulness, and for his great reverence for God, which the blinded people of his own time could not see.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A BRAVE HERETIC.

THE people who lived long ago among the hills of Greece used to believe that the gods they worshiped lived far away on a glorious mountain-top, and looked down thence upon the distant homes of men. But one day a new fable arose among them. It was said that one of those far-off gods had come down to earth and taken up his abode among men ; for on the flowery fields of Sicily he had entered into the form of a common shepherd-boy and watched the sheep of King Admetus. This fable brought the Greek people just a little nearer to the truth, if it broke down the gulf they made between the gods and men, and made them fancy that the humblest human soul might be inspired from above.

It was no fable Theodore Parker wanted to tell people, but a truth which yet bore some likeness to this story of the ancient

Greeks. For he thought that men in his own time had poor and narrow views of God and of his dealings with the world, and he wanted to teach them to find Him always acting in their homes and lives. In this many people thought as he did; but he went further than this, and then they called him heretic and unbeliever. He spoke of the Bible, and said men worshiped it as the unerring guide for all their ways, as the *only* message given by God to men in distant times when he spoke once for all to a few holy, chosen souls. And in thus doing, he said, they were wrong, for they put a limit to God's love and the working of His Spirit in the world. He said to them: "the Bible is one thing, but religion is another. If there were no Bible we should still hear God's voice within; His love is wider than men know, and he still lives and speaks to them as plainly as he spoke in days of old. Let each man, woman, and child keep open soul to receive God's messages, and we shall all be inspired. Let us reverence the Bible for what it is and for all its holy thoughts, but no Bible can tell us so clearly as the voice

in our own heart what we ought to do and say."

Now these opinions of Theodore Parker must not be misunderstood. The Bible was dear to him for the sake of the holy thoughts and teachings it held ; but in his view *all* of it was not equally true and grand, for the men who wrote it were liable to mistakes, and sometimes seemed to read God's lessons wrongly.

The fact was, Theodore Parker would not make the Bible the only Word of God. That was too narrow a thought for him, and he said the inspiring Spirit of God spoke through *all* good books and *all* good souls in all times, for the Father never left his earthly children to themselves.

But no wonder people were amazed in those days to hear this new doctrine preached. Often in their thoughts, viewing the Bible as the inspired and only guide, they used to search its pages for an answer to their doubts, and twist the Bible words into meanings which suited their own needs. So slave-owners found in the Bible pretexts for slavery, and warriors found examples in the

cruel Canaanitish wars. Theodore Parker would have had them faithful to the teachings of conscience above all, with all due reverence for the Bible where its holy words may speak to us as those of no other book can do.

It was in this kind of way that Theodore spoke in Boston. He told of the great, wide communion of God with every human soul, and he left the many creeds that men have formed on one side. For he cared little for forms of belief. True religion, he said, was above the changing opinions of men. Yet because he believed in one God, he called himself a Unitarian, as his fathers had done before him, and now the ministers of the Unitarian churches in Boston were shocked by his free speech. They could not see the reverent spirit that lay in all he said, and the dream never crossed the minds of most of them that perhaps, after all, his thoughts of God were wiser and grander than their own.

So some of these old friends of his called a meeting together, and asked Theodore to attend; and at this meeting hard words were

said of him, and cruel names given to him. Perhaps at this time Dr. Channing's message, "Give my love to Theodore Parker, and tell him to preach what he thoroughly believes and feels," strengthened the young man's courage. The wise old man by this time had died, and the gentle memory of him was all that remained. Well, at this meeting, one man after another rose up to blame Theodore, and he seemed to stand alone, forsaken by all present. At last, in gentler words, one praised his truthfulness, and another followed in similar strains. Then he broke down, and could bear no more. Worn out and wearied he went weeping from the room.

After this came a long, long time when few would speak to him. He was tender-hearted and loving, and this treatment wounded him sorely. Still he was brave and true, and willing to stand alone if need be, and "to let off the truth just as it came to him." He was still a member of the great church of God, and his message to men he would speak, and no man should silence him. But he often thought that the time would come when no church on earth would be left

to open its doors to him. Then he knew what he would do. He would go out into the fields and glens, and on the roadsides, wherever men and women were to be found and he would make the land ring with his voice.

Many friends had warned him to be silent and hide these thoughts of his. They had said to him: "If you find errors in the Bible you will frighten the world, and bring evil on yourself." Now all these warnings had been realized. Yet Theodore was glad he had spoken, and still he cried: "Not *one* book only is inspired, and not a few ancient men alone; but all *may* be inspired, for still God lives and loves."

Two hundred years previous to Theodore Parker's time, kings and princes had gathered together in Germany to silence Martin Luther when he proclaimed the need of reformation in the Church. All in vain. Fearless he rose up and spoke the truth from his heart, saying, "Here I am, God help me, I can do no other." Where would the world have been if Martin Luther had kept silence because he was afraid of what men might do or say? So

with Theodore Parker; the boy was father of the man, and he was still determined to be, and do, and say, the very wisest and best he could. Yet it was hard for him to do so; for it *seemed* as if no place would soon be left where people would be able to listen to him. Still he trusted the way would open in good time, and his sad heart found comfort in his home, in the love of little children, and his work and books.

Time passed, and by-and-by the lonely man was asked by some brave people to give some lectures in Boston. He agreed at once to do so, and the doors of a great building in Boston, called the Masonic Hall, were opened to him. A crowd of curious people flocked to hear, and went home again, it is said, "with their hearts aflame." The next winter he lectured again, and after this he resolved to have his lectures published, that what he believed and spoke might be more widely known. But he had to seek long before he found a publisher willing to help forward such a book. When at last it came out, it quickly traveled far and wide through America, and crossed the sea to the English shores. Thus the seed

he sowed was springing up ; but Theodore did not yet guess the harvest that should be reaped. Long afterwards he heard the following story of a boy who read that first book of his.

One Sunday, an idle youth in a country house, who found time pass slowly, looked for a book to help to while away the hours. Some one gave him that new book by Theodore Parker which was still almost unknown. Nothing better was at hand, so he took it, fearing, however, to find it very dull. Some days afterwards the youth brought back the book to its owner, and said to him :—

“ Will you sell me that book ? I want to own it.”

It was given to him, and he went away. Years after the idle youth had become an earnest, noble man, the helper of every good cause he met with. The book, which he still owned, was bound in leather to preserve it, but the pages were loose and falling out, so often had he read it himself and lent it ; and all that was worth having in himself he traced to the influence of

those brave teachings of the heretic Theodore Parker.

But, meanwhile, the preacher himself was walking in the dark. He seemed to be breaking away from all the quiet old ways and thoughts into some unknown field of work, and it was a comfort to him now and then to go back to Lexington to see the old haunts of his boyhood, and pluck the violets on his mother's grave. He grew worn and thin, and kind friends who were still left to him joined together to send him to Europe for rest and change of scene. So one day, his wife and he said their good-byes to West Roxbury for a year, and sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in search of health and peace.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SCATTERING BROADCAST.

A joyful welcome met him at West Roxbury, when, strong and ready for new work, Theodore Parker set foot again at home. He had been among the grand Swiss mountains and the Italian lakes, and he lived in old cities which spoke to him of the great deeds of the past; and best of all, he had met with, and talked to, wise and noble men whose words gave him courage to follow after truth, and give his best thoughts to the world.

West Roxbury had missed his kindly words and deeds, and the cheerful voice and presence that made the world bright to others, however sad he might be himself. Now he was strong and able to bear the coldness which began again to meet him in Boston on every side. Sunday after Sunday he spoke to the few listeners in his village church, and longed to be of wider use among

his fellow-men ; but there seemed to be no further opening for him.

Now, there was at this time in Boston, away from the great city churches where the rich and well-born people flourished, a mission church hidden away in a poor part of the town, where working men and women flocked together to find the bread of life. The preacher in this church was a Mr. Sargent, a good friend to his people, who used to seek them out in their poor houses, and try to help and comfort the sins and sorrows of the Boston back streets and courts. He knew that Theodore's words were such as his people needed ; for they told of the love of God, and of hope for every down-trodden, sinful man. So one day he asked him to preach to the people in the mission church, and poor, weary men and women came from their hard, sad homes to listen, and went back with new strength. But Mr. Sargent forfeited his church by this act. The people who had placed him in his mission work were among the men who called Theodore Parker a heretic and " unsound " in belief ; so the poor people

lost their preacher and friend. Yet some good arose out of this wrong. The story went abroad; and certain young men who loved justice and fair play resolved that "Theodore Parker should have a chance to be heard in Boston."

In those days a great gloomy building, called the "Melodeon," was standing in Boston. Because no church would open its doors to such a preacher, these young men hired the Melodeon, and asked Mr. Parker to preach there every Sunday morning to such people as would come to listen. This chance could not be lost, and it was settled he should preach in Boston every Sunday morning, and return to his own church and people at West Roxbury for the evening service.

It was a cold wet morning in February, 1845, when Theodore Parker first spoke in the Melodeon. Snow lay on the streets and roofs, wind and rain blew and splashed against the gloomy building, and the dark sky threatened storm. Surely only a few hearers would venture out on such a day! Not so; careless of rain and snow, people

crowded in till the great hall was full. Sunday after Sunday they came together, and some of them had never been in a church, and some were tired of creeds they could not believe, and all came gladly to hear one speak who gave them faith and hope once more. There was always one spot of beauty in this ugly building. Before the preacher, on his desk, stood flowers in water,— wild flowers as the spring advanced,— violets and lilies and gentians from the brook near his old home; and these country messengers helped him to tell his message to the dwellers in the city of the ever-present love of God.

Before long a new step in life's pathway opened out to Theodore Parker. It was plain that *all* Sunday must be given up to the crowds at the Melodeon. He must leave West Roxbury, and use all his time and strength in the new work in the city. So there was a sad farewell sermon to his village friends, and a sad farewell also to his pretty country home. Then life began for him and his family in Boston. The new house was in a street. Meadows and trees were changed

for houses, and the birds' songs for the noises of city life. But every room was kept bright with flowers, creeping plants were trained in his study window, and playthings for the children still found room near his desk, though books covered shelves and tables and spread themselves over the rest of the house. What a change from the day when the farmer's boy had earned his first book by picking whortleberries in the early morning in the Lexington fields! Every day his life became more full of work. He began to travel over the country to lecture in distant towns, and in lonely places where settlers still lived in their rough log huts. On such journeys he used to carry a bag of books with him to read on the way. Often, however, the books were laid aside, that he might talk with his fellow-travelers. In this way he sowed good, brave thoughts among the young, and gave comfort to sad people and never knew at the time what became of the seed he sowed.

Perhaps if such people had known the name of the stranger who cheered their lives, and gave them fresh hopes, they would

have shrunk away from him ; for report was busy with his name, and news of his heresies spread quickly over the land. But, unknown, he made his way at once to the hearts of all he met. "Ah!" said an old lady one day who chanced to hear him preach as a stranger in a country place — "Ah! if that infidel, Theodore Parker, could only have heard this man preach!"

It was no easy life to travel and lecture in this way. Often he was wet through ; often without food when weak and weary ; and often he came home worn out and ill. At home, too, he was always busy. About this time he began to write a book on the growth of religious ideas in the world ; and this book he planned to finish in ten years' time, if he lived so long. But he had few quiet minutes without interruption. Up into his study from early morn till late at night came all sorts of people, wanting all sorts of help and advice ; and every day he wrote many letters. But through all this busy life, Theodore Parker's was a pattern home ; and every person who came there felt its peace and the sunshine he spread within it.

Strange to tell, pictures of bears and carved images of bears, little and large, were to be found in every room in his house, and his wife's pet name was "Bearsie." One day, in the Swiss town of Berne, he had seen the patient, pitiful bears in their deep, dreary pit, and had thought of the great, powerful creatures ever after.

Through the noisy, dirty streets of Boston visions of the fair country home he had lately lived in went with him constantly; and sometimes he and his wife took holiday together, to see the early apple blossoms at West Roxbury, or the flowers in the fields round the old farm at Lexington. But even better visions than those of country sights and sounds went with him wherever he went;—holy thoughts and high ideals, which he put forth into his daily life, and thus made it rich with noble deeds. Some of these thoughts now and then took the form of poems, and he said one day to an old friend: "I sing prayers when I loiter in the woods or travel the quiet road." Read one of these prayers thus sung. No wonder a grand life grew out of such thoughts, when every *little* chance for work was used, and every *little* duty was done.

“ Father, I will not ask for wealth or fame,  
Though once they would have joyed my carnal sense.  
I shudder not to bear a hated name,  
Wanting all wealth, myself my sole defence.  
But give me, Lord, eyes to behold the truth—  
A seeing sense, that knows the eternal Right ;  
A heart with pity filled and gentlest ruth ;  
A manly faith that makes all darkness light.  
Give me the power to labor for mankind ;  
Make me the mouth of such as cannot speak ;  
Eyes let me be to groping men and blind ;  
A conscience to the base : and to the weak  
Let me be hands and feet ; and to the foolish, mind ;  
And lead still further on such as Thy Kingdom seek.”

Day by day his influence spread more widely. There was no fear now, as there had been at West Roxbury, that he was not using all his powers. In doubt and danger he had sown his seed, and God had sent the winds to blow it far and wide over the land. Well for him that he had said in faith what he thought right ; for now, in distant lands, his words brought help to many thirsty souls, though still at home in Boston he was often met by anger and scorn.

Hundreds of miles away, in the wild lands of Minnesota, where the great River Mississippi takes its rise, a working man had gone out from Boston in those days to make

a new home in the lonely plains. There was a hard fight to be fought with treacherous Indians: forests to cut down and swamps to drain: and the sharers of his toil were a few workmen like himself. By degrees they built a saw-mill and a blacksmith's forge, and two or three wooden huts to live in. But they had brought little besides their tools from the distant city. One possession more this unlearned leader of the little company had with him. This was a volume of Theodore Parker's sermons; and at night, when work was over, he and his comrades used to gather round the log-fire, and the best reader among them would spell out the sermons; and then all talked over their meaning, while the stormy winds howled round this little church in the wilds.

By-and-by Theodore Parker had a letter from these camp-men, asking him to send them out some more of his sermons—such as would suit a rough settler's mind the best. His words had taught them to work with a will, and to see a holy calling in the labor of turning the wilderness into a garden.

Another day a letter, badly spelt and hard

to read, came to him from the Far West. A poor farm-boy sent it. He told in it how years before he had lost his left hand. Then brothers and friends clubbed together to send him to school, where he learned to read, and came upon Theodore Parker's first published book, "The Discourse on Religion." Then he was made a teacher, and when he had earned enough money, he sent to Boston for more sermons. These he lent to other people, and could not keep to himself the new thoughts they taught him. So a cry rose against him in the village where he lived. He was called an infidel, and old friends and brothers forsook him. All this he wrote, ending his letter thus: "I expect in a few days to have no home. I am poor. Last summer I was a day-laborer. Now no one will receive 'an infidel' on his farm. I want to get work in Boston, where I can clasp you by the hand, and listen to your noble words, and take example from your manly life. Write brave words to me and I will try to live down all this opposition." There is no need to tell that Theodore Parker

stretched out the strong right hand of help to this new disciple, and the youth became another centre of influence to many others.

Now, what Theodore Parker did that so changed the current of the thoughts and lives of the men and women who listened to him, was this: He taught them to look *within* for the clear voice of God, and to believe that endless grace and strength might be their own if they sought for them. So will and faith grew strong in his hearers; and, instead of searching always into the past for a dead message which moved the souls of others once long ago, hard-working men and weary, burdened women, and youths and maidens, meeting the cares and puzzles of life, learned to say, "The Lord is on my side *now*, and I will listen to His whisper in my soul, and will follow wherever it may lead."

This was Theodore Parker's idea of inspiration, and this was the message he gave to the people of his own time, who were so apt to think the Bible was the only Word of God, and to twist its precepts, drawn from any page, into guides for their own blind

lives. No wonder the rough settlers blessed this man, who taught them their true source of strength as they gathered round the camp-fire at night; and no wonder he himself had no fear of the hard names given to him by his fellow-men. The wonder is that they could not see how much grander and truer his view of inspiration was than their own.

On the last night of the year 1852, Theodore Parker wrote thus in his journal: "Forty-two years ago, my father, a hale man, in his fifty-first year, was looking for the birth of another child before morning. Poor father! and poor, dear mother! You little knew how many a man would curse the son you brought into life and piously and religiously trained up. Well, I will bless you. True mother and father were you to me—the earliest thing you taught me was duty. Duty to God, and duty to man; that life was not a pleasure and not a pain—but a duty. Your words taught me this, and your industrious lives. What would I not give that I could have added more gladness to your life on earth—earnest, toilsome, not without sorrow. As you look down from Heaven—

if indeed you can see your youngest child—there will be much to chide. I hope there is something to approve. Dear, merciful Father God, I would serve Thee and bless mankind!"

So he looked back over forty-two years, and saw the ever-widening path which he had trodden step by step in faith. No early struggles were forgotten; and because he remembered so well those hard days of work that he had gone through when he first entered Harvard College, therefore he had kindly thoughts for youths who were now in similar case. So he wrote each year to the principal of the college, and asked him for the names of any new comers who were poor, and in need of help to pay their college fees. Then followed unexpected presents to cheer those downcast hearts. His house in Boston, too, was always open to lonely students far away from their own homes.

One day the son of an old friend of Mr. Parker entered Harvard. His home was in the country, and his family so poor that great efforts had been required to find the means to send him to college. Theodore

Parker guessed that the mother and sisters, in their poverty at home, were grieving that they could do no more for the boy they had sent out into the world. Accordingly it was not long before their home was gladdened by the news that a valuable book the young student needed, and could not buy, reached him with the following little note: "*Dear Jo: This book is from one who loves your father very much, and hopes to like you equally well: so be a good boy.*" More books and other comforts followed this first gift; and the youth became one of many who would not for the world have disappointed Theodore Parker's hopes for their future.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### **FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM.**

IN the year 1852 came another change. "The heretic, Theodore Parker," gathered such crowds of listeners round him each Sunday that the Melodeon was no longer large enough to hold them. The great Music Hall in Boston would admit three thousand people; and that building was now chosen for his use. There every seat was filled; and before the vast, silent crowd stood this man, who had once been a farmer's boy in Lexington—and three thousand souls waited for him to speak.

"How can I feed so great a multitude?" he thought; "I am but as a boy with five barley loaves and two small fishes." Yet, true to his own doctrine of inspiration, he listened while God spoke to him; then forth came his message to the waiting crowds, and he never failed to touch their hearts. The fact was, all he said had first come home to him-

self so clearly that it presented itself to his hearers as a living truth that could not be gainsaid.

One day he spoke of the great love of God, which gives hope of restoration even to the most guilty. There sat in a gallery that morning a poor castaway, who had, perhaps, gone astray and lost himself in the temptations of the city. The better nature of this man, so long asleep, woke up in answer to Theodore Parker's words; and, to his own surprise, he cried out: "I know it to be so! I feel it to be so!"

Theodore Parker stopped and, turning to the place whence the voice seemed to come, he answered: "Yes, my friend, and you can not wander so far off but God can call you back." So came light into the dark places, and so fresh life sprang up in stony ground, because this man from his boyhood had listened to and obeyed the "inner voice."

There is a hymn written by Theodore Parker that we sometimes sing in our churches and Sunday Schools. No doubt it was sometimes sung by the great multitude in the Boston Music Hall. He who was a leader

to so many people in his own day had a very reverent spirit, and he looked up to many leaders greater and better than himself. Of all these leaders, Jesus Christ was the Head, and so he wrote thus of Christ and loved to hear the people sing these words :—

“ Oh ! thou, great Friend to all the sons of men,  
Who once appeared in humblest guise below,  
Sin to rebuke, to break the captive’s chain,  
And call thy brethren forth from want and woe—

“ We look to thee : thy truth is still the Light  
Which guides the nations groping on their way,  
Stumbling and falling in disastrous night,  
Yet hoping ever for the perfect day.

“ Yes, thou art still the Life ; thou art the Way  
The holiest know : Life, Light, and Way of Heaven ;  
And they who dearest hope and deepest pray  
Toil by the Life, Light, Way which Thou hast given.”

It is strange to think that in the Boston churches at this time preachers were preaching against the “ infidel ” Theodore Parker, and praying for his conversion ! Meanwhile, as he prayed in the Music Hall, tears would chase each other down his face, so much in earnest was he ; and as he read the story of Christ’s life on earth to the people, at certain

passages he was unable from deep feeling to go on ; yet they were old, old tales to most men, and tales by which they could no longer be moved to tears.

Here is one more poem by Theodore Parker. Then our story must tell of very different scenes and times ; for stern days were at hand, full of great danger for men like him.

“ O, Brother, who for us doth meekly wear  
The crown of thorns about thy radiant brow,  
What gospel from the Father dost thou bear  
Our hearts to cheer, making us happy now?  
'T is this alone the immortal Saviour cries,  
To fill thy heart with ever active love :  
Love for the wicked as in sin he lies,  
Love for thy brother here, thy God above,  
Fear nothing ill, 't will vanish in its day ;  
Live for the good, taking the ill thou must,  
Toil with thy might, with manly labor pray,  
Living, and loving, learn thy God to trust,  
And He will shed upon thy soul the blessings of the just.”

Twenty years had passed away since William Lloyd Garrison, a poor and unknown youth, had set up his printing-press in a gloomy garret in Boston and began to publish the *Liberator*, his anti-slavery paper. Week after week, he had worked on patiently,

saying to himself, "I am in earnest; I will be heard"; and by-and-by the people of America were compelled to listen. Slave-owners began to fear the little paper which spoke so bravely against the crime of slavery, and so pitifully of the sorrows of the slaves. They tried to stop it and crush its sale, but in vain. People only began to read the paper the more, and to talk about it. It could no longer be said that people were ignorant or silent about slavery, for the once feeble cry from that poor, dark room began to ring through the land. Then a few men joined Garrison in Boston and formed an anti-slavery society; and then, in other cities, two or three more followed their example and, fearless of threats, upheld the unpopular cause.

In the year 1845, when Theodore Parker left his quiet country home and work in the village of West Roxbury for the wider interests of city life in Boston, Garrison became known to him; and just about the same time events took place in America which helped to turn his thoughts to the struggle against slavery which Garrison was living

to uphold. For in that same year, 1845, the great waste lands of Texas were to be added to the United States, and the question arose, Was this new State to be a Slave State or a free one?

Theodore Parker's religion was not a religion of creeds. He thought that men must not only believe in God: they must also "do justly and love mercy." He knew that sooner or later the question must be settled whether America should be a free empire or a slave empire; and if a handful of earnest people, by their earnestness and influence could help to incline a nation towards right deeds, he must be one of the handful. So he made up his mind that life and strength must be given by him, if need be, to this struggle against slavery; and while most other preachers did not dare to speak of this subject in their churches, to him it often seemed there could be no better lesson for the day.

One morning in the year 1846 a ship from New Orleans, where slave-holders abounded, sailed into Boston Harbor. Boston men owned the ship and Boston sailors formed

her crew. The sun shone brightly on the white sails, as if to welcome her return home ; and the sailors, glad to reach their own shores, sprang joyfully on land. From the ship's hold crawled a poor, wretched slave, half dead with fear and hunger. He had hidden himself away in that dark hole to escape from his master in New Orleans, and hoped he should be set free if once on Boston soil, where no slaves were kept. But the poor fellow was mistaken. The sailors went to their own homes and were welcomed by glad wives and happy children. The sun might shine on free and happy Boston, but the miserable slave was sent back to slavery by the Boston owners o' the ship.

Now was a time when indeed Boston must be roused ! Garrison's patient work for so many years had not been in vain. His *Liberator* had prepared the way, and when Theodore Parker joined with him to summon a huge town meeting in Faneuil Hall and called together a Vigilance Committee to guard that such an outrage should never disgrace the city again, then the people of Boston answered with a will, and the great hall was packed from floor to roof.

Hundreds of men never forgot the noble, eloquent words they heard from Theodore Parker that night. But his speech called forth the rage of the friends of slavery. They mocked at the "higher law of love" which he said forbade the custom of slavery permitted by the law of the land, and they accused him of overthrowing the teachings of the Bible when he proclaimed the crime of making human beings into slaves. The newspapers had bitter words against him, and Boston merchants, who lived by means of slave-grown cotton, upheld a strong party against this handful of workers for the cause of freedom.

There is a grand old story that tells how an angry king, long years ago, went forth into the lonely desert to rebuke a brave prophet who was trying to rouse the Jewish people to believe in a truer religion than they had known before, and the first words of the king were: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Whenever a new teacher wakens the minds of men to higher light, then the old spirits of the king and the prophet meet face to face once more, and the prophet is blamed for the

loss of the old false peace in which the world lay before he began to speak.

So when Theodore Parker preached his doctrine of inspiration, or when he spoke against slavery, it was said that he troubled America. But the real troubler in that case, as in every other such case, was the spirit that was content with old ways, and would not waken to the new gleams of light that dawned upon the earth.

Now, one reason why Theodore Parker had the spirit of the old prophet, and not that of the king, was because he always kept before his view a great principle, by which he tried to rule all his acts. Just as, when a boy, he had vowed to be and do and say the very best he knew; so now that he was a man the same wish was strong within him, and he would take no course, however trifling, but that which he felt to be the most right and true. Whenever he met with any who thus tried to rule his life by such a guiding principle, such an one became a hero and a leader to Theodore Parker. History gave him many examples of this kind; others he found among people

living in his own day. In his study was the portrait of such a leader. This was a statesman, named Daniel Webster, whom Boston then sent as her representative to Congress. This man Theodore Parker honored because he believed him to be true and honest, living to help forward whatever was right and just, with no thought for his own gain or loss in the matter.

But one morning Theodore took down this man's portrait from his study wall, and, kissing it sadly, he turned it away where he could no longer see the once much-loved face. What had happened? That day America was ringing with terrible news. A bill had been passed in Congress, called the "Fugitive Slave Bill." This bill decreed that any slave fleeing from his owner into a Free State might be pursued and carried back into slavery. Moreover, it announced that any one who gave shelter in a Free State to a slave thus hiding, would be liable to a fine of \$1,000 and six months' imprisonment. *Now* there seemed small chance of safety for slaves in any part of the United States; and Daniel Webster had

been the chief supporter of this bill! Theodore knew that his fallen hero had acted thus to please the pro-slavery men and gain their votes for his election as future President.

The following Sunday the Melodeon was crowded as usual. In his sermon Theodore Parker spoke of the new Fugitive Slave Bill. No doubt his hearers knew beforehand how strongly he would speak against the injustice of the law. But a great awe fell upon the crowd when he said that at the first chance he should *break* this new law! For some moments there was silence through the hall. Plainly here was a man who dared be true to his conscience in deed as well as in word. Then what was best deep down in his hearers' souls answered to his words, and the silence was broken by a great outburst of cheers.

## CHAPTER IX.

### "A HERO IN THE STRIFE."

AMONG the people who used to worship each Sunday in the Melodeon were a carpenter and his wife—William and Ellen Craft. They had a nice little home in Boston, where they had lived for many years. Theodore Parker knew them well, and went often to see them in their own house, and welcomed them gladly when they came to visit him. He knew the sad story of their past lives, but it was a secret from other people in Boston. Years ago they had been held as slaves (for they had a little negro blood in their veins) by a cruel master in one of the Southern States. They had managed to escape from slavery, and had fled a distance of nine hundred miles, hiding in swamps and passing through unknown lands till they found a resting-place in Boston in the Free State of Massachusetts. There they had lived peaceful, hard-working lives till

one dreadful day in 1850, soon after the Fugitive Slave Bill had passed Congress. That day Theodore Parker, who had been lecturing in a distant town, came home late. Then he heard that slave-hunters were in the city searching for his friends, William and Ellen Craft.

Now came the first chance for him to break the wicked new law. If he would love his neighbor as himself, he must save his neighbor from being carried off as a slave. No time was to be lost. That night he took the poor woman into his own house, and wrote his next Sunday's sermon with a loaded pistol on his desk. Nor did his work end here. Venturing still further, he sought out the slave-hunters in their hotel, and scared them by his scornful words right out of Boston. Before many days were over, William and Ellen Craft were sailing over the Atlantic Ocean to a safe refuge in England.

Not long afterwards another slave named Anthony Burns, who had sought refuge in Boston, was seized and shut up in the court-house of the city at the time Theodore Parker was saying good-bye to some dear old friends who were about to sail for Europe.

"I doubt if they will ever see me again," he wrote in his journal; "for I must not let a fugitive slave be carried out of Boston, cost what it may. I will not use weapons to rescue a man, but I will go unarmed wherever a reasonable chance of success offers, and I will make a rescue." Then he made his way to the slave-pen in the court-house, and putting his hand into that of the despairing man, bade him have courage for help was at hand.

That night another great meeting was held in Faneuil Hall. There Theodore Parker's words made many hearts beat quickly; for he called on the men who heard him to go quickly with only the arms God gave them to rescue this poor slave. "Men and brethren," he cried, "I am not a young man. I have heard cheers for liberty many times, but I have not seen many deeds done for liberty. I ask you, Are we to have *deeds* as well as *words*? Be sure the men who kidnap a man in Boston are cowards, every mother's son of them; and if we stand up and declare this man shall not go out of the City of Boston without shooting a gun, then he won't go back."

In that great meeting, men were moved to right deeds by Theodore Parker's earnestness. There was a great rush to the court-house to rescue the imprisoned slave. But a report of the meeting in Faneuil Hall had spread abroad, and soldiers were sent down to guard the court-house. The attempted rescue failed. Next day Anthony Burns was carried down to the harbor by a strong guard; but the Vigilance Committee hung with black the Boston streets through which he passed.

Theodore Parker's promise of help to the slave, Anthony Burns, did not end thus. A sum of money was raised, with which to buy him from his owners. He was sent to college, and the dull, crushed mind slowly wakened up. In course of time he was able to write to Theodore Parker, who had never lost sight of him, and had sent him every now and then words of kindly help. The letter told how his thoughts went back to the day in the Boston court-house, when this brave friend was not afraid to push his way into the slave-pen, and take the hand of the runaway, friendless slave.

Such were some of the ways in which

Theodore Parker helped the cause of freedom in America. No time was left now for quiet study, and the hope, which had been so dear to him, of writing a book on the growth of religion, died away. Longer and more frequent journeys must be taken. Sometimes he went to lecture against slavery into the very Slave States themselves. He feared no danger while about his duty, and asked not whether he was among enemies or friends.

One night, while on one of these journeys, he was present at a great meeting of the friends of slavery. He stood in a closely packed gallery, and looked down upon the excited crowd below. Not knowing that he was there to answer him, one of the speakers ended his speech by saying:—

“I should like to know what Theodore Parker would say to *that!*”

The hall was filled with men who upheld slavery, and who were ready to lay violent hands on any one who opposed their views. Theodore knew this well; but he loved justice and right more than he loved his life, and he cried out with a clear strong voice:—

“Would you like to know? I'll tell you

what Theodore Parker says to it ; " and then he spoke out bravely in defence of freedom for the slaves.

That was the signal for a riot. The excited people knew then who he was, and shouted out his name with cries of : " Kill him ! Kill him ! Throw him over ! "

It seemed as if nothing could save him from their fury, when, wonderful to tell, he calmed the raging crowd by his voice and quiet, resolute bearing.

" You will do no such thing," the people felt, rather than heard, him say — " You will do no such thing, and I will tell you what I say to this matter."

So his courage and calmness quelled the tumult, and in the midst of slave-owners and upholders of slavery, he gained a hearing for the truths he had to tell.

More than one such event as this happened. Truly, he was giving up life and strength in the struggle, and far and wide, wherever the great question of freedom or slavery arose, Theodore Parker's name was heard. Into the White House at Washington, where sat the President, Millard Fill-

more, who had signed the Fugitive Slave Bill, came his stirring words. He wrote the President a letter, telling him that when fugitive slaves came to his own door seeking help, he could not forget the words of Christ: "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, ye have not done it unto me." Therefore, though fine and prison waited for him, he *must* help such men in their trouble; he *must* reverence the laws of God; come what may, he *must* be true to his religion.

It is easy to fancy the life of peril and excitement that Theodore Parker lived. But through all, the quieter duties of life were not forgotten, and by words and deeds he taught that a high ideal may glorify any work, however humble, and that a life unknown to the world may be made great and holy by gentleness and truth. So he had help and comfort to give the multitudes who flocked to him, in the Music Hall, from the weary ways and hidden paths of the city, while he was fighting with all his might the wickedness in the high places of the earth.

Towards the end of the year 1854, the

results of his struggle against slavery came upon him. He had broken the Fugitive Slave Law, he had hidden slaves in his house, and he had helped many others to escape. He had spoken brave words against the law of the land whenever he had a chance to do so. "What shall I do," he asked himself, "if I am sent to gaol?" This was his reply: "I will write one sermon a week and have it read in the Music Hall, and printed next morning. But who shall read it?" Who could take his place and win the hearing of three thousand people? Yet his words must not fail to go forth, for now they were carried far and wide over America; and even across the ocean people learned the lessons that he taught each Sunday in the Boston Music Hall.

The evening before Thanksgiving Day he sat in his study. A stranger asked leave to speak to him, and was shown in.

"I have come to arrest you, Mr. Parker," said the man, showing his warrant, and Theodore went with him through the streets of Boston to the court-house. His trial was fixed for the first Monday in April. Three

bondsmen were easily found for him, and meanwhile for a few months he was a free man. On the last night of that year, 1854, he wrote this prayer:—

“ O Thou Spirit who rulest the Universe, seeing the end from the beginning, I thank Thee for all opportunities of usefulness which Thou hast afforded, for all manifold delights which have clustered round my path. But how little have I grown, how little done! Inspire me to do more, to become nobler in the purpose and motive of my life. Help me to resist new temptation, and do the new duties which the year brings with it. I know not what a day may bring forth—bonds or shame—perhaps a goal. Help me everywhere to be faithful to Thee, so may I love and serve my brethren more; yet still may I love mine enemies, even as Thou sendest rain on the just and on the unjust.”

Spring came, and Theodore Parker’s trial was held in the court-house. But it did not proceed, for no case was proved against him.

“ Mr. Parker,” said the Judge, “ you have only crept through a knot-hole.” And Parker answered: “ I’ll knock a bigger hole next time.”

But no such trial was ever held again in Boston, and another record stood forever of a man who held firm to what was *right*, rather than to what was *worldly-wise* and *safe*.

Those days which called forth Theodore Parker's bravery are over, and probably the fierce civil war which followed them might have been spared if every man had been as true to the right as he was. Slaves are no longer bought or sold in America, or captured in the streets of Boston, and even the memory of such evil deeds may die away. But the fact remains, that there is always some battle to be fought for the right; and whether old or young, we need in our lives the spirit that made Theodore Parker what he was and would have made him true and noble, whatever his work had been.

For about three years longer he thus worked on, and wore life and strength away. Friends besought him to rest, but he only answered in such words as these: "I must work while it is day. God has entrusted me with certain powers, and I must use them for my fellow-men. I come of a long-lived stock,

and hope with care to survive ; but it matters little whether I go through or go under, if I do my duty as I ought."

At length strength failed, and journeys and lectures and other work must end, for he quite broke down. His illness was the signal for a fresh outbreak of wrath against his religious views, and meetings were held, and sermons preached, and prayers offered against this Boston heretic. Theodore Parker was no longer the almost unknown young man he had been when he first roused the Boston world by the first sermon he preached in the city. Now his sermons were read by tens of thousands ; his words were carried over the land, and he was the leader of reformers. But the lion at length lay powerless.

So, as he lay stricken down with hemorrhage of the lungs, the churches of Boston busied themselves against him and his heresies : but thousands of people mourned for him as their friend and helper ; and messages and inquiries came crowding into his sick-room. On January 2, 1859, he had preached for the last time in the Music Hall, and his subject had been "On what Religion can do

for a Man." A week after, a short note was all he could send to the people assembled in the hall. The doctors gave little hope that his life could be spared. Another voyage to Europe was the last chance; and it was settled that in a month's time he should sail, if his strength would permit. Meantime, farewell messages went in and out of the quiet room where he lay; and among his last short notes, was one of thanks to Dr. Francis, for all the help he had received from him long years ago, when he was a friendless youth fighting the battle of life in Watertown.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE LAST VOYAGE.

IT was no mournful company that set sail with Theodore Parker in a few weeks' time. His wife, and the three friends who went with him, could not despair while he was so full of hope and courage. As he lay on the deck of the steamer day after day, with only sea and sky around him as far as eye could reach, his thoughts went back over the past years which had by degrees led him into a life so full of work; and he longed to find strength for new duties ere he died. He often spoke of the poor people in Boston, and the sad homes he had been used to visit, where illness and trouble were: but always he was serene and cheerful.

At length they landed at Santa Cruz, in the West Indies, and there he gained strength enough to take walks, and enjoy the new scenes and flowers, and to write letters to the anxious friends at home. After this they

visited England and France and Switzerland. For several weeks they made their home on the hillside of Lake Geneva. Sunny meadows lay round them, and the gleaming lake below, while beyond its blue waters rose the distant snow-covered mountains, with their peaks cutting the summer clouds. The bracing air gave him new vigor, and there seemed sure ground for hope that he might go back to America strong and well.

But in August the cold winds began to blow, and it was needful to travel further south. So the little party went to Italy. In Rome, old and new friends gathered round Theodore Parker, and he was the life of the circle. Suddenly, however, a change for the worst showed itself: the strength he had gained left him as weak as he had been before he sailed from home. Swiftly the news spread to England and America, and there was widespread sorrow felt.

By slow degrees he was removed to Florence. For days as he lay in the beautiful city his thoughts wandered away to his home and work. "Come, Bearsie," he said to his wife sometimes, "let us go and see our

friends." Sometimes he would ask, "When is the vessel going? Will it not go soon?" At other times everything was clear to him, and he knew then that the end was near. Sadly he said one morning to a friend: "I am not afraid to die: but there is much to do. I have had great powers given to me, and I have but half used them." But one strange thought gave him comfort, and he told it in these words: "There are two Theodore Parkers—one dying in Italy, and the other I have planted in America!"

Perhaps he did not know how true this saying was. The influence he had sown in America is bearing fruit to this day; and even we, who now read this story, may learn from him to try to be and do and say the very best we can. A great river can be traced back along its winding course to the tiny mountain brook from which it rose. So with a noble life; and as we look back over the story of Theodore Parker, we see in its beginning the figure of a boy by a sunny farm-yard pond, listening to and obeying the *first* whisper of conscience, and find there the original impulse from which his after greatness sprang.

The last day of his life drew near—the 10th of May, 1860. At times he sent loving messages to his far distant friends; leaving his wife for comfort to their tender care. His great library he bequeathed to the city of Boston—a free gift.

“Lay down your head upon my pillow, Bearsie,” he said to his wife, “for you have not slept for a long time.” And so, with flowers about him, and filled with a great peace, Theodore Parker passed away.

THE END.



# THEODORE PARKER

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## VI. APPENDIX.

## BIOGRAPHY, CRITICISM, ETC.

A collection of matter in Manuscript and Print in regard to T. P., made by Miss C. C. Thayer, of Roxbury, Mass. 2 vols. 4to. [In Boston Public Library.]

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